



in the reptile room

Weirder Creatures Loom,
than in all of your dreams...

In the Reptile Room by Number Ten

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Summary: Based on a dream I had and crosses over with Descendants. When a strange lightning storm transports tv and movie characters to one location; curiosity makes this adventure a struggle for survival. Trapped in a room where nothing is as it seems, it's a race to escape and save those you care about. With snakes, an old lady, and a scientist pulling the strings, it's all or nothing.

1. Prologue: Song of Doom

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In the Reptile Room... where the baby screams

"What the hell is this place?" Crystal gasps in horror. They should have listened to their guts when the man offered to show us his collection... collection of reptiles. Allowed to be taken in by this woman's alleged kindness, now... now she was alone, in the strangest place that was best described as the worst acid trip of all time.

Weirder creatures loom than in all of your dreams

A strange looking snake, with eyes on its scales, slithers past the young adult and she steps back in shock and unease. It was as if the entire world was now a gigantic hallucination. What was once a decent sized greenhouse had expanded into this vast landscape and thick jungle, like everything, had just transformed into Jumanji. It seemed to become bigger overnight, a maze of wilderness and now snakes...

"Snakes," she hisses. "Why does it have to be snakes?"

Emma, Killian, and Henry were all missing and the daughter of the Dark One is now alone in this crazy place. The one good thing was that her magic was still working so fighting whatever threats she might encounter would not be a problem.

In the reptile room... hither and thither

Suddenly, there's a crack of a twig from behind her, Crystal snaps to attention letting her hands light up in anxiety and fear. Was it another freaky looking snake coming to attack?

"Who's there?" she calls.

The girl suddenly feels thrown against a tree by some kind of invisible force. She grunts in pain and lands in the mud, stunned but not knocked out. Anticipating a fight, her hands light up again.

"Who are you?! Show yourself!" she screams again.

Rumpel's daughter creates a shield just in time to feel the brunt of yet another attack. Something powerful is pressing against her defence, but she can't see what it is. Fighting against it is not easy, it's putting a strain on her own body, but with no way of knowing who or what it was, she had to do something to fight back.

Crystal lets her anger take over and fill her up completely. Normally, she hates using her shockwaves, but in this situation, the attacker would never see it coming.

The power expands outward from her body, slicing creepers from their vines, leaves from their stems, and making the mud beneath her crumble slightly with the sheer magnitude of her ability. She hears the thud of a body behind another group of trees. Knowing she's gotten her assailant, she goes to investigate.

It is not what she expected.

A girl lays on the ground stunned from the shockwave attack. The girl had hair that at one point must've been shaved because it was growing back in an unruly fashion. It was dark brown in colour, to match her eyes. She was wearing what looked a hoodie and fashions that must have come out of the 1980s. A dribble of blood is coming out of her nose.

Feeling bad for hurting her, Crystal goes to help. She offers her hand to the girl, but the stranger bats it away looking very angry.

"W-Who are you?" Crystal asks the girl.

The girl's eyes go wide for a moment as if a deer in headlights. She stares at Crystal's chest for a long time. Unsure of why this stranger is staring at her, she looks down to see the golden locket that once belonged to her mother has been opened, most likely from the fall. The girl gazes at it as if hypnotized. She reaches up, Crystal flinches thinking she's going to attack, allowing her hands to light up. But the girl merely points at the picture.

"Mama?" the girl asks in a weak voice.

"Uh, yeah, that's my mother, her name was Lillian... Who are you?"
The daughter of the Dark One holds her necklace for a moment before shutting the latch, her hands still glowing purple.

The wide brown eyes then go to the glowing purple light emanating from this stranger's hands.

"You... are like me?"

"Do you have magic too?"

"Magic?" the girl says in confusion. "Magic isn't real. Mike told me that"

"It is where I come from..."

"The Upside Down?"

"What?"

"Are you from the Upside Down?"

"N-No whatever that is, I'm from Storybrooke Maine... I'm from Earth if that's what you want to know. Whose Mike and who are you?"

Crystal, while confused offers her hand again. This time the girl takes it, although reluctantly.

Once they are on their feet, the girl speaks again.

"Mike... Kali! My friends! My friends are missing!"

"You're missing them too?"

"You have friends?"

"Yes, a woman with blonde hair and white light coming from her hands, a man with a beard and piece of metal where his hand should be and a teen with your kind of haircut."

An eyebrow goes up in confusion.

"What is this place?" the girl asks.

"I wish I knew."

"That woman... that old woman..."

"You saw her too?" Crystal gasps.

The girl nods. "She is no friend."

"No, she and her son, he's some kind of scientist or monster or something. She trapped me and my friends in here."

Like Papa, the girl thinks but says. "Mine too. I have to find them."

Crystal grabs the girl's arm to stop her from running off. "We need to be smart about this, we can't just run off into the jungle, it's like Jumanji met the Amazon and had snake babies."

"Jumanji?"

"Not important, this place is crawling with snakes and who knows what else. I think we need to stick together. That way we can find our friends and then get the hell out of here."

The girl looks at the young adult with confusion at first and then understanding.

"Stick together like friends?"

"Uh... sure, friends and allies, I'm Crystal by the way. Crystal Miller," holding her hand out for the girl to shake.

The stranger steps back for a moment but then accepts the hand. "I'm Jane... but I usually go by Eleven."

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A/N: Just bear with me to see where this goes. It was a very detailed dream and I felt that I had to write it down.

2. Chapter 1: Stormy Night

Chapter 1: "It was a Dark and Stormy Night"

"What is this, monsoon season?" Crystal asks, staring out the window as the rain pounds at the windows of Emma's yellow Volkswagen bug.

"I've never seen it rain this much in all my years at sea," Killian agrees.

"I guess that's saying something since you've lived for almost 300 years," Emma says, squinting and trying to keep her eyes on the road.

"Thanks for coming to New York with me guys," Crystal says, leaning in the back seat of the car. "I just wish my landlord would have accepted my last month's rent online instead of in person."

"Our pleasure, anything to get out of town for a couple of days," Killian adds.

"Yeah, Mom's been driving me crazy," Henry complains, listening to his music with one earbud in and one out.

"Well, you are graduating soon, she just wants you to prepare for your future. I, of course, am on board with her by the way," Emma adds.

"Why not go to college in New York or maybe Boston?" Crystal asks.

"I don't know," Henry shrugs.

"Look, Kid we understand it's a big decision, but time will fly and before you know it, you'll be graduating."

"Can we not talk about this anymore?" the teen begs.

"Fine, I need quiet anyway to concentrate, it's impossible to see in this rain," Emma says.

The tiny yellow bug drives at what feels like a snail's pace as heavy

raindrops punish the vehicle, the roads slick with water, lightning flashing above them and thunder rattle the ground. The headlights could only illuminate a tiny portion of the road at a time between the trees of the forest, casting shadows all around them.

"Where's the town line already?" Emma hisses.

"You sure you didn't take a wrong turn, Love?" Killian asks his wife.

The blonde wants to become defensive, but she knows better. "At this point honey, even I'm not sure anymore."

"Do you want me to use some magic?" Crystal asks. "Create a forcefield around the car to clear the windshield or maybe an orb to light the way?"

"We can't risk it, someone might see it."

Crystal leans back and continues to stare out into the blackening night. Dark thunderclouds dump gallons of rain on the group and move aggressively across the sky by the angry winds. She swallows a lump in her throat, one of anxiety. She'd never liked thunderstorms in general, especially in the middle of the woods where they could very easily get lost. Every time lightning flashed, brightening the tree trunks that stood around them like tall towers or legs, she flinches, afraid that she might see something strange or even scary. Or... maybe she's been watching too many horror movies lately.

"Bloody storm," Killian hisses under his breath.

At that moment, the strongest gust of wind thrashes against the car, as if in response to the pirate's comment. Emma keeps the car straight on the road, or so she thinks.

"Are you sure this is the highway?" Crystal asks. "We haven't seen a single car for a while."

"We live in a town protected by magic, you shouldn't expect too many cars around here," Emma says, trying to stay confident.

"It just doesn't seem familiar to me, that's all," the daughter of Rumpelstiltskin shrugs.

Suddenly, something dashes in front of the car. It appears to be very long and slender; it seemed to throw itself right under the car so quickly that no one has time to react.

"What the hell-!" Emma gasps, trying to put on the breaks, but it seems to run over the thing, bumping the front wheels and sending the car into a spin due to the slick pavement. There's a series of lightning flashes in quick succession and the loudest clap of thunder that could not be heard by the passengers as the blood in their heads were making their ears ring. The spinning seems to stop and the vehicle lurches forward toward the edge of the road. Everyone in the car braces themselves in case of a crash. Instead, the bug lands in a ditch on the side of the road with a large jolt forward. Fortunately, no one is hurt.

"Everyone all right?" Emma asks. Killian puts his arm on her shoulder to check on her, while Henry looks at his friend.

"Yeah."

"What the bloody hell was that?"

"A deer?" Henry suggests.

"It was too low to the ground to be a deer," Emma says, still trying to collect her wits.

"A rabbit?" Crystal offers.

"Not fast enough,"

"Well, whatever it was, it's gone now, or you ran over it," Killian says.

"Good point," Emma nods. She then tries to put the bug in reverse and back out of the ditch, but the car is in the mud deep enough that getting out will not be easy. The wheel ends up just spinning in endless circles and spraying muck everywhere.

"Damn it!" Emma hisses.

"Are we going to have to get out and push?" Henry groans.

"We might," his mother sighs. "We shouldn't use magic in case someone passes by."

"We may as well all get wet," the teen mutters. "Or I can call for help, Grandpa can bring his truck to tow us out. We're probably not too far from Storybrooke."

"Try that before we have to get muddy," Emma agrees.

The other two members of the car are silent, gazing out the window. Crystal can feel it in her veins that something just happened to them and it was not some random incident. The Dark One's daughter can feel strange energies surrounding them. They were not in Maine anymore... she wasn't even sure if they were in this world anymore. Killian feels that this was not an accident at all, his gut is telling him that there is something sinister occurring.

"That's weird," Henry says.

"What?" Emma asks.

"My phone's not working."

"You mean you can't get reception?"

"No, I mean, it just died. I still had half a battery left."

The other occupants of the car check their phones, some more expertly than others. The same thing, their phones have shut off suddenly.

"This is really weird," Emma frowns. "The crash might've done something to them."

"Aye," Killian agrees. "But I think that the sooner we get the carriage working, the sooner we can get on our way."

Crystal nods in agreement.

"Does that mean we have to get wet?" Henry asks.

"I'm afraid so Lad," his stepfather says.

The teen swears under his breath. Three of the four people get out of the car, no umbrellas could be found. Almost immediately they become soaked to the bone and the strong winds push against their quivering figures.

Emma stays inside to try and use the engine to back up. The other three go around to the side where the tire has sunk in and prepare to lift it.

"Are you sure I can't use magic?!" Crystal calls over the sound of the rain and thunder. "Lifting a car is not a problem for me, I threw one at my dad once."

"Just push!" Killian shouts.

The engine revs up as the three push with all their strength, but the metal is slick and hard to hold onto in this weather. They end up just getting their feet stuck in the mud and splashed with excess muck from the tires.

After several tries, the three give up. It's just then that the three notice the storm is letting up. The thunder has faded into the distance, the lightning no longer appears, and there's less rain pounding on them.

Emma gets out of the car, to get the car jack out of the trunk, thinking it might be useful. As the rain lets up, everyone's eyes adjust to the gloom to see a forest with what appears to be vines wrapping around the trunks of the trees. In the darkness, it cast the illusion that snakes had staked their claim upon the trees. The road they are on didn't even have bright dividing lines. It was almost a dirt road.

"You definitely made a wrong turn Mom," Henry says, wiping his bangs out of his eyes.

"No kidding, I didn't think I was that far off," Emma groans, bringing over the car jack.

As she and Killian prep the tool... or rather Emma shows Killian how to prep the tool, Crystal peers around the car and back the way they came. She notices that there were no streetlights, no sounds of cars

anywhere... if they had made a wrong turn... couldn't they go back? It was completely silent, nothing but the sounds of rain falling from the trees and the occasional cricket.

She also looks to see what they hit on the road, but there was nothing; no body, no wounded creature. She bites her lip, she can still feel the energy around her. It was not good, very dark and it seemed to slither through her veins uncomfortably.

As she turns back to help with the car, she sees a single orb of light coming along the road in front of them. It wasn't one of hers, so it set the daughter of the Dark One on edge, even though her father should have been the scariest thing she'd ever encountered. Her heart pounds against her chest as the orb gets closer and closer. She becomes nervous, knowing something was wrong...

This storm had happened on purpose and she had a feeling that they weren't in Storybrooke anymore.

3. Chapter 2: There Was an Old Lady

Chapter 2: There was an Old Lady...

Crystal wants to put her hands out defensively as she often did when an attack was imminent, but remembering what Emma said about using magic out in the open like this, her flat hands became fists, the way she used to settle disputes on the streets of New York.

Killian, Emma, and Henry all noticed the light as well. The pirate felt an equal sense of alarm. He steps forward, to be in front of his wife to protect her. He knew she didn't really need protection, after all, she was the one with the magic, but it was his instinct, a compulsion he had felt since the day he'd met her.

The orb seems to come towards the group at a slow pace as if walking towards them. They hear footsteps behind it. The light continually flickers, indicating that some sort of flame was inside the orb. It cast sharp shadows on the surrounding trees and illuminated the wet pavement beneath it.

Eventually, the light stops and the group can see that it is, in fact, a round lantern with a lit flame inside. This really makes Crystal uncomfortable, what kind of people used lanterns any more. It was too old-fashioned... she becomes worried that the car may have fallen through a portal and they ended up in the Enchanted Forest or some very similar land.

The person behind the lantern is not very pleasant either, at least by the light. An old woman with long silvery/white hair pulled back into a bun stands in front of the group. She's wrapped in a shawl, wears very old rubber boots, and has an apron wrapped around her waist as if she'd just come from her kitchen. Her eyes matched her hair, except they were much more lifeless, examining each face with curiosity. Around the eyes were layers of wrinkles, some were shallow, and others were deep, indicating that she had lived a long and possibly harsh life. The cruel test of time had not been kind to her; her expression was withered and tired. Yet, her lips were curled into a smile, very soft and gentle. She looked like a kindly old grandmother, the kind who would offer neighbourhood children

cookies or sit out on her porch and knit on Sunday afternoons.

Crystal, Emma, and Henry all relax a little since this woman appeared rather harmless. Killian, however, feels a chill go up against his spine. The lantern seemed to make her gray eyes glow, they looked like the colour of a gravestone and the light sharply contrasted the wrinkles around her face and made it appear sunken and dead. He could tell that this woman was not what she appeared to be.

"Good evening," she says in a voice that cracked ever so slightly at the end of her sentence.

"Hello," Crystal ventures.

"Having trouble with your car I see," she asks.

"Yes," Emma says. "It's stuck in the mud. Do you live nearby?"

"I do, just at the end of the road here."

"Do you have a phone we could use? Our cell phones aren't working, and we might have to call a tow truck."

"Ah, at last, those new-fangled devices have finally failed your society," she smirked slightly. "Nothing can beat an old-fashioned telephone, I always say."

Emma raises her eyebrow skeptically at the weird use of the word 'society,' but the woman could just be very isolated and traditional.

"Do you have a phone we can borrow?"

"Of course, dear, of course," the woman says. "And while you're calling, you can dry off. We wouldn't want you to catch a chill."

"We?" Henry asks.

"My son is visiting me at my house right now, he also became detained because of the storm. You'll meet him when you come to the house. Come now, this way,"

The woman turns and begins walking back the way she came, her

light illuminating the path.

The entire group are very reluctant to go. Killian grabs Emma's arm.

"I think we should hike back towards the main road Love,"

"But that could take hours," Henry points out. He shudders in his soaking wet sweater.

Emma looks up into Killian's blue eyes, she can see the worry on his face. She can see the protective side of his personality shining through again. She understood the woman had given her the creeps as well. "I know... I'm really skeptical too."

"This is usually how many horror movies start out," Crystal mutters.

"But we don't have much of choice. Our phones probably don't work because there's no reception out here, but if we can call my dad or someone to come tow us out, we'll be out of here faster."

"I still think we'd be better hiking back to the roads," Killian insists.

"In the middle of the night?" Emma asks. She knows she's trying to be reasonable. All of them are soaking wet and the middle of nowhere, so when someone offers a chance for warmth and a phone, beggars can't be choosers. She leans up and gently kisses Killian on the lips. "Look I know this seems really sketchy, I don't like this any more than you do, but unless you want to stay in a freezing car for the rest of the night, we need to take the lesser of two evils. If it comes down to it, Crystal and I will use our magic, in fact..." Emma goes to the trunk of the bug and pulls out her pistol. She then loads it and puts it on her belt. "We'll be prepared. Let's just call and then we'll go, I promise."

Killian grabs his wife's hand and gives it a squeeze. Both Crystal and Henry stand in the middle of the road, waiting for the couple to join them. Both shiver in their soaking and mud-stained clothes, one more hesitant than the other.

"All right," the pirate agrees. The two exchange a quick kiss before going to join the others.

"Come along now dears," the woman's voice calls from up the road. The lantern has now become an orb of light again, glowing just around the edge of the trees. Vines and creepers wrap around the large tree trunks, looking like snakes lying in wait for their prey. The surrounding woods give off a creaking sound as the wind blows the branches back and forth. The overgrown leaves of the high trees seem to block out the moon and stars, making it the darkest of places. The old woman is carrying the only source of light, standing, and waiting for them. None of the group wanted to stay out here in the darkness, nervous about what might be lurking out there.

With baited breath and support from each other, they walk in the direction from which their "guide" had come. Killian and Crystal bring up the rear of the group; they occasionally look at one another, their eyes expressing anxiety and doubtfulness of their situation. Crystal knew that they were not in Maine and Killian knew that they could not trust this woman, but both knew that they had to get out of here as soon as possible.

A/N: Looks can be deceiving. Please follow and review.

4. Chapter 3: A House is Not a Home

Chapter 3: A House is Not a Home

The group of four follow the lone light source as the old woman hobbles along the dirt road. It doesn't take long for them to catch up with her. Emma and Henry walk alongside the woman, squinting in the darkness to see where they were going. Crystal walked behind them, hands in her pockets and she continues to look around into the darkness. Her magic was acting up, in weird ways, she could feel the field of energy around her. It was not a pleasant feeling, her stomach rotated a few times and the power seemed to fluctuate rhythmically, almost like a heartbeat. Killian brought up the rear of the group, he simply did not trust the figure guiding them. There was something very off about the gray-eyed being taking the form of an old woman. He constantly looked behind them, in case they were being followed.

"I forgot to ask your name," Emma says politely.

"I'm Mrs. Baker," the woman answers. "Andrea Baker."

"Thank you, Mrs. Baker, for offering us your phone."

"It's no trouble at all, it's not often that people get stranded here, the road is awfully hard to find."

"In the rain, you couldn't see your hand in front of your face," the blonde comments.

"Very true," Mrs. Baker says.

They come to the edge of what was likely a driveway. There's a mailbox with the name *Baker*, painted on it with now fading black letters. The woman turns onto the road, made up of gravel stones and the tall trees overhead formed almost a canopy above them. They all got wet as the left-over rain fell onto them as they went. Killian could not shake the feeling of dread as they wove deeper off the road and into this person's property. There seemed to be a fence along the edge of the driveway, it was made of thin metal and had barbed wire along it. The pirate had learned the term when he visited David and

Snow's farm, he was told that the points kept cows from straying too far and kept other critters from getting in. Either way, it was to prevent escape.

The house at the end of the driveway made all four people gasp.

It was a large house, at least three stories or more that was almost as tall as the trees surrounding it. It had a sort of Victorian feel about it, a front porch that had two large pillars to hold up the roof. There was a rocking chair on this porch along with a basket full of knitting. It could be assumed that Mrs. Baker spent her afternoons quietly rocking back and forth. There were some lovely beds of flowers covered with mulch at the base of the porch, many bushels of clovers and pansies, jasmines and morning glories sprouted from them. The front garden was relatively well kept. The grass grew a little wildly, but there were also topiary hedges, carved into long looking shapes. They were almost meant to represent giant snakes made of leaves. There was an upstairs porch/balcony that was over one of the main windows that also had a rocking chair there too. The house was also covered with ivy. It seemed to grow wildly along the walls of the old house, spreading out, almost like a virus. The pointed leaves were also very big and moved ever so slightly in the wind, giving the illusion that small hands were waving down at the visitors.

There were two old, heavy oak doors that the old woman unlocked. She blew out the lantern she had with her and she held the door open for everyone to enter. Again, Killian hesitated at the door but followed everyone else in.

An odd-looking chandelier hung above them in the front hall, it was made of iron and curved in odd ways. The ends were lit with lightbulbs this time. There was an archway at the end of the front hall that framed a staircase that wound upwards in a spiral pattern to the next level. The banister was carved from polished wood that shone, but also looked rough and bumpy.

"Please come in, just hang your wet coats to dry," Mrs. Baker says. She hangs her shawl on a coat rack next to the door. It was an unusual coat rack as the ends of it had the heads of snakes carved from the wood.

Almost everywhere the group looked there were either snakes or some forms of reptiles represented in some way. When one got a closer look at the banister, it was carved to look like the scales of a snake that wound its way up to the stairs. On the left of the front hall, was a long tapestry with various lizards, snakes, and turtles woven into it. The rug in front of the staircase gave the impression of a snakeskin. There were framed diagrams of reptiles and their anatomy along the walls, several snakes' skins had been preserved in frames as well and one could now tell that the chandelier was meant to look like a swarm of snakes with lightbulbs in their mouths.

"What's going on Mother?" a voice calls from the very end of the house.

"We have some stranded motorists," the woman explained.

A man appeared from wherever in the large house he had come from. He had large and thick wire-rimmed glasses that magnified his eyes ever so slightly. His eyes were a very dark brown, almost to the point of being black in colour and they squint at the new visitors. He wore a brown leather apron tied in the back and thick boots that punished the hardwood floor as he walked closer. He wore a white shirt that was stained in many places and wore green gloves that looked like gardening gloves. His hair was graying ever so slightly on the edges, but it was also unkempt and tangled in places.

He peered at the group with suspicion but also much curiosity. He removes his gloves and tucks them into the pouch of his apron. He stands with Mrs. Baker, just under the archway at the group.

"They got lost in the storm and their car got stuck in the mud," the man's mother explained.

"That's a real shame," he says, his lips quivered into almost a smile for a second.

"We just came to use your phone," Emma says. She was now becoming increasingly uncomfortable with every passing second. Killian was right, this was wrong, but they had no choice. The place, if it wasn't a shrine for snakes, could actually be very beautiful.

"By all means, you are welcome to use it, Mother can make you some coffee or hot chocolate if you'd like."

"You'd better get them some towels too," Mrs. Baker adds.

"I'll do that. There's a fire in the fireplace if you'd like to go warm up."

"Thank you..." Emma says, biting her lip. She just wants to use the phone and get out of here.

"Follow me to the phone," Mrs. Baker says. "And please take off your shoes so you don't track any mud in."

The group reluctantly obliges before walking together. Killian grabs Emma's hand, their fingers interlocking. Henry stayed relatively close to his mother and Crystal, seemed to be the most impacted. Her head was throbbing with the overwhelming feeling of energy. Her ears were ringing continuously. This place was not that welcoming, especially with the addition of the snakes, which were not her favourite animal.

The group follows the woman to the kitchen, which was adjacent to the living room and sure enough there was a large roaring fire at the end of the room. But again, it was decorated with reptiles. The posts on each of the furniture were carved to look like snakes were holding up the alligator leather skinned chairs and coaches. The wallpaper in the living room had a strange pattern of lizards around it and there was a large, green rug in front of the fireplace. More snake skins were preserved and hanging on the walls. A weird looking fern sits in the corner that has vines dangling from it. Lamps that had the sculptured bases that looked like iguanas light up the entire room. What made the place even creepier was the very large alligator or crocodile head that was mounted over the fireplace. It had black, beady eyes that seemed to stare at the group, with its mouth open, large enough for someone to stick their head inside.

The kitchen looked a bit more normal, with a cast iron looking stove and large refrigerator. There was a kettle on the stove that the woman filled with water and put it on to boil some water. The wooden handles of the cupboards were carved to look like snake skins and the woman brought down several mugs, all snake-themed

around the handles.

"Would any you like coffee, tea, or hot chocolate?" Mrs. Baker asks.

Henry looks at his mom as if to get approval. While he too was skeptical of everything, the place was really creepy looking, he could never pass up the opportunity for hot chocolate. His stomach growls slightly at the thought.

"I'd like some please," he asks. "With cinnamon inside."

"Oh, I don't get that order very often," Mrs. Baker chuckles.

Emma decides to join her son, they were all very thirsty.

"I'll have the same with cinnamon"

"What about you, young lady?"

"Uh... just some herbal tea please, if it's not too much trouble,"

"No trouble at all," the old woman says with a warm smile. "And for you sir?"

Killian did not trust this woman, not at all. For some reason, he was worried that she might try and poison them or something. He wasn't sure why he felt this way, everything just felt off, or maybe it was the pirate inside of him, distrusting of others.

"Just water please," he finally says.

"You sure you don't want something stronger?"

"No thank you," the man says politely.

"Well the phone is in the living room there on the back wall, why don't you all go warm yourselves by the fire while I get your drinks."

Everyone hesitates, but the roaring fire was rather tempting.

"Go on make yourselves at home," she says with a warm smile.

Reluctantly, the four travellers walk into the eerie looking living

room. It felt like all the different reptiles were watching them, it was not a pleasant feeling to have.

Henry finds a stool and brings it close to the fire. He rubs his hands and holds them out to get warm. Emma spies the telephone in the corner and practically runs to it. Crystal finds a chair that was close to the fire as well. She hopes that sitting down will settle her apparent migraine. She shivers in her wet shirt and she begins combing through her wet hair with her fingers to get rid of any knots. Killian decides to stand close to Emma as she tried to phone her parents or somebody to get them out of there. Mrs. Baker hums to herself in the kitchen, managing everything as if she was expecting them to just drop in from out of nowhere.

5. Chapter 4: A Reptile Man

Chapter 4: A Reptile Man

"Here we are," Mrs. Baker says, setting the drinks down on the glass coffee table.

The woman stands back and stares at her four guests, expecting them to do something. With some hesitation, Henry grabs the mug of hot chocolate from the tray. He takes a small sip

"Thank you," he says.

Emma continues to try and get a signal on the phone. She couldn't get in touch with her father or mother, or Regina, which made her more nervous than before.

"Um, Mrs. Baker?"

"Yes, dear,"

"What's the local towing service number? I can't reach my parents."

"Oh here," the woman waddles over to where the married couple stood. She opened a drawer on the table where the phone sat and brought out a phonebook. She places it in front of Emma. She then searches until she finds the service pages.

"Thank you," Emma says.

She puts the phone to her ear and dials the number. Killian keeps looking at the alligator head on the wall, it seemed to be watching them. His mind flashes to the thought that this was like the creature that allegedly took his hand... there was no way he would spend 200 years hunting a beast that could usually just be turned into a woman's handbag. He knew the thing would just die of natural causes, not live forever like Rumpelstiltskin. The warmth of the fire is inviting, but he still could not shake the feeling of dread within his body.

"Yes hello?" Emma's words bring the pirate out of his daze. "I'd like to

call for a tow truck."

The fact that Emma got through to someone made Crystal second guess her theory that they weren't in some weird parallel world or something. She sits with her tea, her head still throbbing constantly. It was like a buzzing the back of her head that she couldn't get rid of. Her ears are ringing too. Her head felt like it was going to split open.

Emma listens as the voice on the other end told her what information they needed. "Uhm, the address..." she turns to Mrs. Baker for help.

"Just outside Anguis Road,"

"Just outside Anguis Road," the Saviour repeats.

Emma listens intently to what the man had to say. "Are you sure you can't get here sooner?"

This was off-putting the rest of the group, all of them wanting to get out of this creepy house as fast as possible.

"Okay, thank you," the blonde says before hanging up.

"Well?" Killian asks.

"Apparently there was big pile-up on the highway and their tow trucks are needed along with a few others from nearby towns. It might be a few hours before they get here."

"Hours?" Henry moans.

Killian grabs Emma's arm tightly. He gives her a hollowed look. She understood what he meant, and she could see the worry in his eyes. They all wanted to leave, despite the nice hospitality Mrs. Baker was giving them; the house was creepy and the overall mood of the location was tense and anxious.

Just then the old woman's son walks in with some towels. He also places them on the table, next to the warm drinks.

"You'd better drink your hot chocolate dear before it gets cold," Mrs. Baker says.

Killian squeezes Emma's hand tightly and she kisses his cheek gently. She hovers at his ear.

"We won't be here much longer, I promise," she whispers.

She could feel how tense he was. She knows that since the rain had stopped they didn't have to wait in this place much longer. After they were hydrated and had warmed themselves up, they could leave, stand by the car, or even go up the street as Killian had originally suggested.

The couple goes to the leather couch, grabbing their drinks as they went. When Killian sat down, almost immediately he feels something move underneath him and a hissing sound is heard. He jumps up in panic, spilling some of his water.

"BLOODY HELL!" he shrieks.

He looks to where he had been sitting. Mrs. Baker's son rushes over and lifts up one of the couch cushions.

Underneath it is a long yellow looking snake that had tan spots on its scales. It wasn't much longer than a ruler, but its body was rather thick. The strange man picks it up and almost immediately, the snake wraps its yellow body around his arm. Its tiny tongue flickers in and out as the man brings the snake close to his face.

"I am so sorry. Sometimes Askook burrows his way into tight spaces. It's part of their species." The man then begins talking to it as if it were a human being or a baby. "Hey there Askook, are you being a naughty boy?"

The snake flicks its tongue in and out in response. The man brings the snake so close, it's almost like he's going to kiss the thing.

"You're such a sweet boy, aren't you?" he practically coos at the thing. "Such a pretty little boy."

All four of the guests cringe. Both Emma and Killian back away slowly, towards the edge of the couch, extremely creeped out. None of them particularly liked snakes that much, Crystal especially. She hated the things because they were just so scaly and many of them

were dangerous. Only Henry seems to be ever so slightly curious at the reptile.

Mrs. Baker clears her throat and that seems to snap her son out of his one-on-one time with this slithering snake. "I'm sorry, sometimes my son gets caught up with his pets."

"Pets?" Emma winces at the word.

"Not really pets," the man says. "More like specimens."

"Specimens?" Killian asks, having never heard that word before.

"For research," the man explains. "I'm a herpetologist. Dr. Nathair. But most people call me Nathan for short. I study snakes and all kinds of reptiles. I've been collecting and studying them for many years."

Mrs. Baker beams happily. "He's very proud of his collection. He's well renowned in his field."

"I was able to buy this house out here to allow me to carry out my research in peace. My mother always loved the countryside, so she asked to move out here too."

"So, you're a scientist who studies snakes?" Crystal asks for clarification, but she can't think of anything less appealing to study.

"Yes, anything that can crawl across the ground and is cold-blooded. Snakes, alligators, turtles, crocodiles, lizards, I even study a few amphibians like frogs and toads as well," Dr. Nathair says proudly.

The group of four looks at each other, now even more uncomfortable than before. At least now the anatomy pictures and the preserved snake skins made more sense, but it didn't make it any less creepy. Emma frowns as Killian grabs her arm tightly, this was even more of a reason to leave. She nervously takes a sip of her hot chocolate to avoid saying anything, Crystal mirroring her actions.

"Would any of you like to see my work?" he asks.

They all look at each other, anxious eyes, and tense facial expressions.

However, Henry is beginning to feel a little strange, his head is becoming a bit light and his vision occasionally went in and out of focus. He shakes his head, trying to clear it. Thinking it might be dehydration, he takes another sip of hot chocolate. Unlike the rest of the group, Killian doesn't want water any longer. He pulls out his flask of rum and takes a long sip. Such animals were not his favourite either.

Suddenly, out of the blue.

"I'd like to see them."

Emma, Crystal, and Killian look over at Henry in shock. They cannot believe what he just said. None of them wanted to stay here longer than they had to and Henry's words just prolonged the visit.

Henry could feel his mind clouding and he wasn't really sure what he is saying. It was as if his mouth and brain were on two separate wavelengths now. He could see that everyone wanted to leave, but his mouth said something different.

"I'll just give you a quick tour," Dr. Nathair says, smiling, as if happy at what the teen had said. "Then you can be on your way."

Without any further words, Nathair walks across the living room, the snake still wrapped around his arm. He pushes back a curtain, revealing heavy looking doors, likely made of oak and towered almost to the ceiling. With a large tug, he opens it with a very loud creak. Inside there are the sounds of animals, almost like a zoo, but the majority of the sounds were hissing, indicating that Dr. Nathair did indeed study reptiles. Henry is standing up and begins to follow the strange man into this mysterious room.

At that moment, Emma feels her mind clouding over too. Her vision is blurring a little bit and her hands begin heating up. She clenches them into fists to hide the fact that her magic might be acting up. She knew she couldn't let her son go into the strange room alone. She places her hot chocolate down and goes after Henry. Killian, still very upset about everything, knows he can't be separated from his wife. He too goes towards the mysterious room.

Crystal is the only one who stays behind. Her head is throbbing uncontrollably now. She can't focus any longer, her mind is in one place but her body is in the other. She feels like she's fighting some kind of battle within herself. She starts to think that there was something in the tea or maybe it was this whole situation. Despite her aversion to reptiles, she can feel her body getting up and going towards the place she dreaded. She wants to stop, but her feet keep going. Eventually, she comes to the oak door and leans on it, planting herself there and refusing her body's pleas to go forward.

When she was at the door, there is a large rush of energy; the same energy she had been feeling the entire time, washes over her like a wave on the seashore. This feels like the source of all the strange power. It is not a good feeling whatsoever, she was dizzy than before and could barely stand up any longer. Her magic is also burning in her veins too. She could feel her magic acting up, she had a similar feeling when she fought her dark magic. She knew this is a bad sign. She wants to open her mouth to say something, anything, to tell everyone they need to leave now, but she couldn't. Her body is tingling from the energy and she almost felt immobilized.

It's humid and hot in the room. It's not particularly big for the most part, like the size of the living room from which they had just come. And it is almost entirely made of glass, like a greenhouse. Within the room are rows and rows of cages; many of them with bright orange heat lamps to keep the occupants of the cages nice and warm. Some cages are made of glass and there are various types of vegetation inside each terrarium. There are also plants that line the walls of the room, most likely to give an atmosphere of a tropical jungle for the benefit of the snakes and reptiles.

"Now this big guy," Dr. Nathair is saying to Henry. There was actually a pit in the floor and inside was a small waterfall and rock like habitat. Inside the pit, resting within the water was the largest crocodile one could ever see. "I call him Godzilla because of his sheer size."

"He is very big," Henry says, almost in a daze.

The herpetologist goes on to describe each of the reptiles, giving a description of what kind of abilities they had and what species they

were.

Emma hovers close to the door of the room, not wanting to go much further than she had to, but she had to stay close to her son, so she could grab him if they needed to leave. She walks down a step and walks right through a spider web. She stumbles back, away from it as she did not want a repeat of what happened with Gideon and his "pet."

Killian keeps his arm around Emma the entire time. He helps clean the spider web from her face. The two watch Dr. Nathair, dread in the pits of their stomachs. Emma is beginning to feel dizzy, unable to think straight. She leans on Killian increasingly with each passing moment, her body giving out on her. Her hands continue to burn, and she attempts to hide the white lights that are part of her magic. She too feels immobilized, unable to think or do anything to protect her husband or her son.

The pirate is ready to leave, he can tell that this is bad, and he finally does what he wanted to do all along.

"And this..."

"I'm sorry sir, but have to go," Killian says. He walks over to the two people and grabs Henry, who seems to be in another world entirely. He knew that something was very wrong at this moment and they had to go or they may not live to see another day.

As he drags Henry away, his back is turned to the doctor.

"I'm afraid I can't allow that Captain."

Killian freezes on the spot, chills cling to the back of his spine, despite the humidity of the room. He turns in horror.

"What did you just..."

Something suddenly hits the blue-eyed pirate in the neck. He struggles to keep upright and hold onto Henry. The teen seems to collapse onto the dirt and mud below them... dirt and mud?! Killian looks, it appears as if Dr. Nathair is getting further and further away from them. Hook removes what is piercing his neck. It's a dart of

some kind, his head is now spinning, the room seems to be getting larger and larger with each moment. He can't tell if he's on his feet any longer. He completely lets go of his step-son, trying to find Emma, get to her and help her, but he barely makes it two steps before he too collapses to the ground, the heavy booming sound echoes in the enormous jungle-like room.

Crystal cannot move at all, she heard Killian say they were leaving. With every fibre of her being, she turns, trying to go. Suddenly, the door slams shut in front of her. There are no handles on the other side, meaning they were trapped. Crystal's hands are glowing a dark purple now, she can't control it. The door begins to fade into the growing vegetation, vines slithering around what was once the exit, but it no longer existed. The daughter of Rumpelstiltskin barely has time to say anything or even scream before everything goes black.

A/N: Thanks to iAmCC and Tamatoa for the reviews. Please follow and review.

6. Chapter 5: First Call

Chapter 5: First Call

"Come on El, it'll be fun," Mike says with a smile.

The reluctant girl sits on one of Nancy's old bikes in the middle of the cul-de-sac. She has a helmet underneath her now unruly curly hair. She looks at Mike reluctantly as he hangs onto the back of the seat. She stares at the glittering tassels that hung on the ends of the handlebars and the white tires.

The girl, formally known as Eleven, now Jane, was learning to ride a bike for the first time. She'd seen Mike, Lucas, Will and Dustin all ride around town on the contraptions, it looked like fun, but she just liked hanging on the back of Mike's rather than riding herself. She felt nervous, she grips the handlebars with much anxiety.

Will, Lucas, Dustin, Max, Nancy, Johnathan, and Joyce stand or sit in the front yard of Mike's home, ready to watch this new event. Joyce had a video camera in her hands, while Johnathan had his own camera to capture the exciting moments. It felt nice to all of them that Eleven was finally beginning to fit in and do normal things that all kids do. Hopper was hoping to see the moment too, but he was stuck at work, but Joyce promised to get it all on film. Mike's mom and Holly watch from the window as well.

"You can do it El...er... Jane," Dustin says, clapping his hands in encouragement.

Eleven looks at Mike nervously, but he gives a comforting smile.

"Scared..." she says.

"I'll be right here the whole time," he says. "I won't let go until you tell me to." He was applying the standard method that all parents do when teaching their children to ride bikes.

"Promise?"

"Friends don't break promises, remember?"

"What about boyfriends?" Eleven gives a small smile.

"They definitely don't," Mike says, blushing slightly. "Ready?"

She nods. Joyce turns on the camera, ready to capture the moment.

"Okay then just push on the pedals," Mike says.

Concentrating hard, Eleven puts her feet on the pedals and pushes down. The bike starts up with a jolt and it spooks her a little. They only go a few inches before she puts her feet on the ground to stop herself.

"Just one foot at a time," Mike says patiently. "And if you need to break, just pedal backwards."

"Okay," she nods.

She puts her feet back up and pushes on the pedals again, her feet go in a circular motion and she and Mike go up the road at the pace she desires. He holds onto the back of the seat to steady her and give her confidence, but he knows she'll get the hang of it soon. As they go forward, Dustin, Will, Lucas, and Max cheer as she rides a little bit faster. A smile slowly creeps onto Eleven's face as they speed up more. The two were coming to the end of the cul-de-sac and Mike knew they'd have to turn around.

"Now turn the handlebars in the direction you want to go," he instructs her.

With some hesitation, Eleven turns to the left with a very sharp and wobbly motion, which causes Mike to nearly let go, but he hangs on as they go around. She starts to go a bit faster as she presses harder on the pedals.

"You're doing great," Mike says.

Jane/Eleven could now understand why the boys liked riding so much, it was fun with the wind in your face and the thrilling feeling of speeding around.

"Turn again," Mike says as they reach the other end of the cul-de-sac

much faster this time.

"You're doing great Jane!" Joyce says with almost a squeal as she captures the moment on film.

Nancy stands next to Johnathan as he kneels to get a different angle of the pair with the bike. Max takes her skateboard and begins to ride around next to them. Jane had only just begun to approve of the red-headed zoomer since she wasn't interested in Mike, but rather Lucas. Eleven manages to give her a smile as she continues to ride.

"Good job... Jane," Max calls as she boards behind the two. "Pretty soon we'll be able to race."

Mike pants as he tries to keep up with Eleven as she pedals faster and faster. He wants to let go, but he knows he can't break a promise to her. They go around in circles several times, her becoming more confident each time. Then she says the words that all of them had been waiting for.

"Let go," she says.

"Are you sure?" Mike pants.

"Yes," she says confidently.

Mike's sore fingers release the back of the seat and he watches as Eleven propels herself forward on her own.

The crowd on the lawn erupts into loud cheers as Jane Hopper is now riding a bike on her own. Her face is beaming with pride and her insides feel so wonderful... happy. She'd never been happier than ever before; she had a loving papa, a boyfriend, lots of friends and a normal life, something she'd longed for ever since she learned about an outside world. She laughs to herself as she continues to pedal around in circles all by herself. It felt amazing to do this and so "normal."

"Don't get dizzy now," Dustin teases.

"Now she'll be able to ride to school with us," Will chimes in.

As she continues to ride, Eleven suddenly hears something. It sounded like someone was calling her name. Her number name, not her adopted one. It was inside her head, not from the friends cheering on the lawn. She turns her head towards the sound.

Eleven... sister... help me...

"El watch out!" Mike shouts.

El turns back and realizes she's about to hit the curb. She forgets how to break, the front wheel stops at the bump, but the bike doesn't. Jane goes flying over the handlebars and onto the grass. Fortunately, the helmet protected her head from becoming injured, but her elbows and knees were not so lucky.

Mike and the others rush to help her as Eleven lays on the grass, blinking really hard trying to clear her head, which was now throbbing. It was not an uncommon feeling with her telekinesis, but her nose wasn't bleeding.

"El you okay?"

"Geez, that was a bad crash."

"Are you hurt sweetie?"

The voices overwhelm her as well as the faces. She continues to blink when the voice comes again.

Jane help me!

She feels Mike's arms go around her to help her up and she almost lashes out at him, but when she sees his sweet smile, she stops. Once she's on her feet, her legs suddenly feel weak, she leans on her boyfriend for more support. Mike is confused by her action and does his best to help her stay steady.

"That was quite the wipeout," Lucas says.

"She tore her pants," Nancy points out.

"Great job on your first try though," Johnathan says.

"Jane honey, where does it hurt?"

Eleven isn't paying attention to the people fussing over her. The pain wasn't bad, she'd had much worse, but her head is still spinning continuously. She looks beyond everyone's shoulder, back towards the power lines behind Mike's house.

Sister, I need you...

"Kali...?" she finally manages to say.

"Who?" Mike asks. "Are you okay El?"

"Did she hit her head?" Nancy inquires. "Good thing the helmet was on."

A bad man has me...

Suddenly, Eleven can see her sister Kali standing beside Mike's house. Her dark hair is still shaved along the side and purple streaks are still present. She wears the familiar dark clothes and chains, she looked exactly the same as she did when the two sisters separated, Eleven to go save her friends and Kali to escape the police. The departure hurt both of them and the younger of the two Hawkins lab subjects still missed her and wondered what had happened to her and her gang.

Her breath catches in her throat and tears come to the edges of her eyes, she's no longer in pain, her sister is here.

"It's okay, Jane, don't cry," Johnathan says. "Everyone falls off their bike."

"Will still does," Dustin teases.

"Shut up," Will says punching his friend in the arm.

But she's not listening, not anymore.

It seems as if she and Kali lock eyes for a moment, Jane manages to smile.

"Sister..." she whispers.

Suddenly, Kali is pulled back by some kind of force. She's pulled behind the house and Jane knew that it wasn't by choice.

"NO!" El screams. She pushes back the group who are all shell-shocked by her outburst. Jane begins running in the direction of where her sister disappeared.

"El?!" Mike gasps in a panic.

"What the hell is she doing?" Dustin asks.

"EL!" Mike calls out to her again, but she keeps running. Everyone watches until she vanishes behind the house.

"What's wrong?" Will asks.

"She must've seen something," Lucas deduces.

"EL COME BACK!" Mike calls, he begins to run after her. Everyone else gets up and begins to follow him.

"That's really weird," Max says.

...

Once she's behind the house, Eleven searches frantically for Kali.

Help me... she hears in her head. ***Eleven help me!***

"WHERE ARE YOU?!" Jane calls out.

Follow my voice... sister help me... he's using me

She begins running along the fence near the powerlines, trying to find her sister and follow her internal voice. She can barely hear her friends calling to her to come back. She continues to run, ignoring the growing pain in her lungs from running so fast. She sprints as hard as she can, between other houses and over other forms of the brush until she gets to the treeline leading into the woods.

Jane...

Without a second of hesitation, she rushes into the woods to save her

sister.

Please Review

7. Chapter 6: Into the Woods

Chapter 6: Into the Woods

"EL!" Mike shouts as he struggles to keep up with her, but she's too fast for them, most likely considering she's had a lot more practice running away than most people. She vanishes into the forest, leaving everyone utterly confused and frightened for her.

Mike stops and pants heavily, leaning down to catch his breath. He really should stop skipping P.E. all the time because it sucks. He gazes into the forest and swallows hard. With the setting sun, the trees are casting sharp shadows, darkening the surrounding woods to look like a dark void... like a void from the Upside Down or the Abyss from *Dungeons and Dragons*. The dark clouds that are slowly beginning to move in, indicating a storm also do not help his comfort level. He finds this rather weird because his mom said they were supposed to have beautiful weather for the next few days.

Despite the threat of weather, he's hesitant to even go further... who knows what El might've seen... a stray demodog that escapes the torch session, a shadow agent from the research labs, or even a Dark Stalker... At this point after what he's been through over the past two years, he'd believe that anything is possible.

Finally, everyone catches up to him.

"What the hell?" Dustin pants, having also been cutting gym class.

"Why would she run off like that?" Nancy asks Johnathan and Joyce not too far behind.

"El does a lot of weird things, I swear she's one superpower away from seeing dead people," Dustin says.

"She must've seen something," Will says, staring into the woods.

"Hope it's not another Demigorgan," Lucas adds and everyone silently agrees with that.

"Did she say anything before she disappeared?" Joyce asks.

"Wait, I got it on video," Johnathan says, remembering that he'd still been recording, even after Eleven had crashed. He immediately rewinds his tape to after they'd helped the girl up.

The group gather's around the camera, the footage is shaky considering Johnathan had run over to help and was not interested in winning an Oscar for best camera work.

"That was quite the wipeout," Lucas said on the tape. Johnathan had accidentally zoomed in on El's face, which looks like a deer in headlights.

"She tore her pants," Nancy's voice can be heard.

"Great job on your first try though," Johnathan said from behind the camera.

The angle then changes so it's pointed at the pavement.

"Jane honey, where does it hurt?" Joyce's comforting voice said.

"Kali...?" the frightened girl's voice said under her breath. She sounds like she's just walked into a nightmare.

"What was that?" Max asks. "Play it back."

The camera then rewinds.

"Kali," it says again. Johnathan plays it back one more time.

"Kali,"

Kali

"Who or what is a Kali?" Dustin asks.

"Sounds like a name," Will points out.

"Does Eleven know someone named Kali?" Mike asks.

"I thought you could answer that," Nancy says. "You are her boyfriend after all."

Mike shoots his sister a glare before turning back to the tape, but everyone is looking at him intently. "Hey, I don't know everything about El, she lived the first 12 years of her life in a laboratory. I don't know who she met."

"Could Kali be her mother's name?" Nancy suggests.

"No, her mother's name is Terry," Joyce says, having met the catatonic woman herself.

"I'd question how you know this, but and we have to find El before it gets too dark and with the storm rolling in, it's not going to be helpful in finding her," Johnathan says, eyeing his mother with suspicion. He continues to fiddle with the camera.

"Another friend?" Max asks.

"We're pretty much the only people who know she exists, I doubt she'd have other friends," Mike says, almost feeling hurt that Eleven might have some secret life she was hiding from him.

Then Will hears the faint word from El's lips as the tape continues to play.

"Sister..."

"WAIT!" Will shouts. "Rewind!"

"What?" his brother asks.

"Rewind, she says something!"

Johnathan does so, with Will watching intently. "Here!" he orders for his brother to stop.

"Shut up,"

"Sister..."

"There, did you hear that?"

They rewind once more.

"Sister..."

"Sister?" Max asks. "What does that mean?"

"El doesn't have any sisters, does she?" Dustin asks Joyce.

"I...I don't know honestly, but I don't think so..."

"This is very weird," Lucas mutters.

"We should all split up and someone should call Hopper," Joyce says. While she's upset that they once again must go out searching for a child, at least this time Will is safe, and she knows where her sons are.

"We're going to need flashlights," Nancy says as she begins going back towards the Wheeler home for the supplies.

"Shouldn't we get some weapons?" Dustin suggests. "In case it's another Demogorgon attack? Anyone want to call Steve to get the nail bat?"

Joyce bites her lip hard, debating whether his suggestion was legitimate or not. It didn't seem like a bad idea, but Eleven had closed the gate, there shouldn't be any more of these monsters... One would hope, but it never seems to go that way for those of Hawkins, Indiana. This place was a mystery and seemed to be at the epicentre of everything abnormal and strange.

"We'll have to hurry," Joyce says. "Either way, the woods aren't safe at night."

...

Within half an hour, the group has gathered outside the Wheeler home with coats, flashlights and various assorted weapons that might be needed.

Steve pulls up in his car and pulls his bat out of the passenger seat. He gives a small smile at Nancy before going up to Joyce, who is handing out flashlights to everyone. Mrs. Wheeler has agreed to be home base for them and she would call if "Jane" shows back up at the

house; plus someone had to keep an eye on a sleeping Holly.

"I got Dust's call, what happened?"

"El... Jane freaked out and ran into the woods," Mike explains, swallowing hard to ensure his mother does not get suspicious.

"Why are we all so worried? It's not like she can't take care of herself. She was the one who saved our asses last year anyways."

Nancy shoots Steve a dirty look and he swallows hard. He knows things haven't been the greatest since she left him for Johnathan, but they were being mature like adults and he is doing his best to move on.

"She was going to rescue someone; someone called Kali," Will explains. "She says it's her sister."

"Sister? Does Kali have powers too? Can she turn cause earthquakes or something?"

"Shut up Steve!" Mike snaps. "This isn't a joking matter."

"It sure as hell isn't," Hopper says gruffly, coming up in his work clothes. His police car He looks just as frustrated as Mike is and is worried for his adopted daughter. He'd lost Sara, he wasn't about to lose Jane either. He looks at Joyce. "Did she say anything else?"

"Just Kali and sister," Joyce sighs. "Jane doesn't have any sisters, does she?"

"Not that I know of, but..."

"What?" Joyce asks.

"Nothing..." he grimaces, thinking hard about something. "Damn, I can't remember what she told me, but it will come to me soon." He then clears his throat. "All right everyone listen up! We need to do this as quickly and as fast as possible. We all know what Jane is like and we can't spook her. I have Powell and Callahan patrolling around the woods down by the lab and side road in case she comes out at them. Their lights will be on. The second it starts to rain..." He

swallows heavily. While he knew Eleven could take care of herself, he still didn't like the thought of his adopted daughter being caught in the wood in the rain. "We abort the search."

"But..." Mike begins.

Hopper shoots him a stern look. He then signals to Mike the worried expression on his mother's face. Mike wishes he didn't have his mother and family worrying about his safety, El was much more important especially if she was encountering another demodog attack.

"I don't want to risk anyone getting sick or getting lost. NO ONE is going alone, and everyone is to have a flashlight and a whistle or something to make noise with. When it starts to rain, either head back the way you came or look for Powell and Callahan's headlights."

Suddenly, an idea comes to Joyce's head. She turns to Hopper. "Jim, what if Steve and I leave our headlights on, pointed at the woods so people know where to go."

"Good idea Joyce," he nods. He adjusts his hat and turns back to the group.

"We'll meet back here at the Wheeler household and... if we don't find her... decide on the next step."

"We'll find her," Joyce says with a small smile, putting her hand on his shoulder in reassurance. Jim forces himself to smile, he knew that it might be false hope at this point, something he tried to avoid giving to the overly distraught mother when her son was missing. He knew they had to be hopeful, but once Eleven was on her own, there's no telling where she might end up after she vanished the first time.

Mike, Will, Lucas, and Dustin get their walkie-talkies working.

"We'll use Delta code if we find her," Mike instructs them and all the boys nod.

Steve eyes Nancy and Johnathan. They stand next to each other and he immediately assumes that they are going to pair up with each

other. He sighs, knowing how much it sucked. He loved Nancy, and on some level, he still does. He wishes that things had turned out differently, but in the end, he did want her to be happy. He can also see that Nancy has a gun in her coat pocket, trying to conceal the firearm from her mother, who is talking to Chief Hopper.

"Yo Steve," Dustin says, taking the eighteen-year-old out of his daydream. "You okay to go with us?"

Nancy, Johnathan, and Max were going in one group; Joyce, Hopper, and Will in another considering Mrs. Byers was still reluctant to let her youngest out of her sight. That left, Dustin, Mike, and Lucas without an older adult with them.

Steve smiles reluctantly, knowing once again that he was going to have to babysit some of the kids. He playfully ruffle's Dustin's hat since his hair was concealed. He thought of the toothy boy as a little brother and both boys trusted each other after they had tracked down Dart last winter.

"Sure," he grins. He puts the bat with the nails on his shoulder and goes to join Dustin, Mike, and Lucas. He knew that since Mike had the hots for Eleven and vice versa, they were most likely going to her than the others.

"Honestly Mr. Harrington, be careful where you swing that," Mrs. Wheeler says with a grimace on her face. "You could take someone's eye out with that thing. What purpose could such a brutal piece of equipment serve?"

Taking down Demogorgon's, the entire group thought together as the distant sound of thunder is heard.

A/N: Special thanks to iAMCC and Tamatoa for the reviews.

8. Chapter 7: There's a Storm Coming

Chapter 7: There's a Storm Coming

A/N: Warning language in this chapter.

"EL!" Mike calls out into the woods. The group hikes through thick brush, getting further out of range of the car's headlights, meaning darkness is surrounding them more and more. His voice bounces off the shadowed trees and is swallowed up by the empty void of darkness. His echo hardly lasts very long before the wind gives its response. The wind whistles between the tree branches making them creak eerily; resembling the sound of an old door swinging open or a rocking chair moving back and forth. The temperature around them begins to drop, causing Steve to shudder and zip up his jacket to keep out the cold. The sounds of animals and the crunching of leaves beneath their feet also accompany the wind's soft undertones above them. A crow caws from a nearby branch before taking flight when Lucas shines the beam of his flashlight in its direction. A few crickets chirp from beneath their feet as each step snaps a twig or crushes a leaf. The boys can feel shivers going up and down their spines, as the fading light of the sun casts sharp shadows around the group. The younger boys become nervous about what just might be beyond the beam of their flashlights.

Dustin shines his flashlight in a certain direction and begins to hike to where El might be, that is until Steve catches the back of his jacket.

"What the hell, Steve?"

"Sorry dude, but like Hopper said, we stay together. And me being in charge of you again means that I have to make sure you don't hurt yourselves."

"Eleven!" Lucas shouts loudly. "JANE!"

"Why would she run into the woods like this?" Steve asks, switching on his own flashlight and keeping the bat within arm's reach.

"El saw someone... Kali and she needed help..."

"And no one knows who Kali is?"

"No," Lucas says. "Eleven might have secrets that we don't know about."

"That's the understatement of the year," Steve mutters.

"Look!" Mike snaps at his sister's ex-boyfriend. "Either you help us find El or you can take your ass back to your house and waste your time watching football and going to bed crying because you lost my sister to Johnathan!"

Steve is taken aback by Mike's comment. His face flushes red and he glares at Nancy's brother, his teeth clench and his hands come together as fists. If this was someone his size and age, he'd pound the snot out of him for bringing up such a sensitive subject but knowing that Mike is half his size and also Nancy's little brother, Steve Harrington is forced to restrain himself.

"You little bastard," he hisses under his breath. "So help me..."

Mike stands firmly with his statement and continues to glare at the older teenager. He's ready to use his flashlight as a weapon if Steve decides to break out the bat, but something stops them from fighting any further.

"Guys..." Dustin calls out, catching their attention.

...

"JANE!"

"JANE!"

"JANE!"

"EL!"

Joyce, Hopper's, and Will's voices echo into the distance as they shine their lights in various directions, looking for any sign of the young

girl. It's as if the woods was talking back to them, calling for a lost little girl named Jane.

"JANE HOPPER!" Jim calls out, his hands shaking slightly because of the fear growing inside of him. His mind flashes to the thought of losing yet another daughter.

"Hopper, I'm so sorry..." Joyce begins to apologize. "I didn't know she would do this I..."

"It's okay Joyce," the chief says, holding his hand up to stop her from droning on a drawn-out and pointless apology. "There's nothing you could have done... Sadly, this isn't the first time Eleven's run off and I'm scared to think that it won't be the last."

The worried mother puts her hand on the worried father's shoulder and pats it. She can see his sad blue eyes reflecting the beam of her flashlight. She remembers how calm and collected he was when Will was missing; while he wasn't very helpful at first, he'd grown to become concerned for the single-mother's mental health and the well-being of her son. He too was at the point of breaking down, especially when they'd been forced to revive Will in the Upside Down. He looked out for his friend, he became her rock when bad things started happening. He is the stoic man of the law and now, it was Joyce's turn to be his rock as they searched for his daughter.

"We'll find her," she says calmly. She then turns, cups her hand to her mouth and calls out Jane's name again at the top of her lungs

However, this entire time, Will Byers has not spoken a word. He's been quietly looking on with his flashlight, practically unresponsive to the exchange between his mother and the sheriff. He continues to gaze out into the gathering darkness. He'd become very afraid of the darkness especially after being in the Upside Down for so long. He was afraid of what might be lurking around every tree, inside every corner, or appear out of every shadow. He swallows a thick lump in his throat as the wind blows against his skin and hair. He shivers and pulls his coat closer to his body to conserve warmth.

He continues to look out in a far-off direction, opposite to where his mother and Hopper were hiking towards. He squints in the gloom

until something catches his eye. For once, he's wanting to know what was just beyond the beam of his flashlight. He swears he sees a human figure dart in between some trees in the distance. He gasps quietly, afraid of what it might be, but then he remembers how much El means to Mike and Hopper, so if he found her, he can't let fear stand in the way.

Taking a deep breath, as if jumping off a cliff, Will begins going off on his own, further away from his mother, regretting that he knew this would scare her half to death. But, he was okay, he has his flashlight with him and he leans down to grab a heavy rock just in case something were to happen. Thunder rumbles above him, meaning his hike in another direction is not heard by the adults of the group.

However, once he reaches the spot where he saw the figure, it's gone. Despite the partial relief in his stomach, Will finds that the light is obscuring his vision, it is being reflected off some of the leaves and silver birch trees and it is not helping. With much hesitation, he turns off his flashlight and begins to listen to his surroundings.

He can hear crickets, some thunder, and nearby bird and... the hissing of a snake?

Will's light encounters a red and black snake slithering through some tall grass and over a tree trunk. It makes his heart pound against his chest, but at least the creature was harmless and wouldn't do anything.

He shuts his eyes again and tries to concentrate on the soundscape around him. He hears more thunder, the wind and...

Footsteps!

His heart skips a beat as the young boy goes off towards the sound, hoping to find Eleven before the rain came.

...

The curly-haired kid is kneeling on the ground and shining his light on something. When Lucas and Mike rush over, Dustin holds up

Nancy's old helmet, the one Eleven had been wearing while bike riding.

"Well, she went through this way," Lucas says.

"No shit, Sherlock," Mike snaps. He stands up. "JANE! EL!" ELEVEN!"

Suddenly, Dustin drops the helmet like it suddenly caught fire. "Jesus!" he shrieks. Lucas shines his light down to see a snake crawl out of the headpiece and slither away from his light.

In the distance, thunder rumbles.

"Guys we need to turn back," Steve announces.

"No way," Mike says firmly.

"Listen here you little shit, I'm in charge here and what I say goes!"

"You're not my dad!" Mike snarls.

"No, but apparently I'm your "babysitter" because you guys can't seem to keep your butts out of trouble."

"You can go back if you want, show my sister how much of a coward you are, but I'm not leaving here without El."

"No, you're..." Steve says through gritted teeth, he reaches over aggressively to grab the back of Mike's jacket to prevent him from going off on his own. However, a flash of lightning spooks them both and they can all see a figure standing in the distance. The piercing white light bolt from above illuminates the surrounding area and they can see a human figure, causing everyone to all gasp.

"Holy Crap!" Dustin shouts over the thunder.

"Mike? Lucas?" a familiar voice calls out.

A flashlight turns on next to the human figure and it gets closer to the group, revealing the missing member of the party.

"Oh god Will," Lucas sighs in relief. "You nearly gave us a heart

attack."

"Sorry," the timider kid of the group says, walking towards his friends.

"Why are you on your own? Where's your Mom and Hopper?" Steve asks.

"I thought I saw someone moving through the trees and I heard footsteps. Turns out it was just you guys," Will answers.

Suddenly, the first drops of rain begin to fall, causing the wind to pick up even more. The faint plunking of drops hitting the leaves and ground surround the group. It sounds like a tiny army, slowly getting closer and closer as more and more drops pound the ground. Lucas and Mike instinctively shove their walkie-talkies into their coats to avoid getting wet and ruined. Will pulls up his hood to protect his hair.

"We have to go," Steve calls over the pounding rain.

"But El!" Mike protests.

"If she's smart, she'd find cover," the eighteen-year-old responds. "It won't help her if we end up getting lost. Let's go."

"I'm not leaving without..."

Another loud clap of thunder shakes the ground beneath them and the rumble echoes of the trees, bouncing onwards into darkness through the pouring rain.

More lightning streaks across the sky above them, it practically blinds them, Mike putting up his hands to block it.

Suddenly, he sees a familiar figure in the gloom. Once his eyes have recovered, he can see the beautiful face he wants to see.

"EL!" he shouts in joy running towards her. He wraps his arms around her soaking and shivering frame. He immediately offers his coat to her, but she seems to be unresponsive, like Will after the Mind Flayer possessed him. He can see her brown eyes are bloodshot, indicating

that she's been crying. It was like the first night, he, Lucas and Dustin had discovered her in the wood, soaked and very frightened.

Both kids squint into the rain, Mike tries to smile at his girlfriend, but she has a scary look on her face.

Suddenly, there are multiple flashes of lightning in successive order that surrounds the group and it becomes hard to process what's happening. The rain soaks their bodies and the sounds surrounding them are distorted by the falling water. The thunder is so loud, Eleven can't hear Mike shouting for her to come and join the rest of them and neither can hear Steve swearing at them to hurry up! Mike can see Jane/Eleven's lips moving, but he cannot make out what she's saying.

Almost as if by magic, the rain begins to let up, the sound of thunder fades away and there's no more lightning. The woods become quiet again and Mike is finally able to hear what his girlfriend was saying.

"Danger Mike, Kali's in danger... and so are we..."

A/N: Please Review, it really makes my day and makes me smile.

9. Chapter 8: Familiar Unknown

Chapter 8: Familiar Unknown

"What do you mean we're in danger?" Mike asks.

"Danger, shit, where?" Dustin gasps, scanning the nearby woods, expecting a Demogorgon attack or something similar.

Lucas raises his flashlight upwards, trying to look around through the rain dripping from the trees. Steve raises his bat and shines a light behind them too.

Eleven doesn't answer at first as there are more flashes of lightning around them. She can feel it in her gut; the world around them is changing, they are in Hawkins no longer. She's not sure where they are now or how they were able to get there, maybe Kali did it, but this seems unlikely. Even if it wasn't her spiritual sister who brought them there, whatever it is... it is dangerous and powerful. It wasn't the Upside Down, but something told El that it was much worse. Vines and creepers wrap around the large tree trunks, looking like snakes lying in wait for their prey. The surrounding woods give off a creaking sound as the wind blows the branches back and forth. The overgrown leaves of the high trees seem to block out the moon and stars, making it the darkest of places, and she is still very much afraid of the dark. The surroundings make her feel trapped in an enclosed space.

Despite her fears, she must work past them, her sister is in trouble. El had figured out that what she had seen was not actually Eight, but a projection or an illusion. She had used her powers to communicate with Eleven elsewhere. Perhaps Kali had become trapped in this strange place and is calling for help now. Whatever it may be, she is suffering.

"Okay, we've found Eleven, now can we please go back before we all freeze to death?" Steve asks.

"We can't," Jane says.

"What do you mean we can't?!" Lucas asks, a bit of panic in his voice.

"Because there is no back."

"What the hell is she talking about?" Steve asks, turning Mike towards him.

"Why are you asking me?"

"She is your girlfriend Mike," Dustin adds.

Mike looks back at El, she's soaked to the bone and he can see a bit of blood dripping from her nose.

"El, what happened? Why did you run away?"

"I saw Kali."

"Who is Kali?" Lucas asks.

"My sister..."

"Sister?!" Mike says in alarm. "When did you have a sister?"

"In the lab..." she answers, swallowing hard when the memories start rushing back.

"You mean she was experimented on too?" Will says quietly.

"Does she have superpowers?" Dustin asks in excitement. His eyes lighting up in excitement. "What can she do? Can she teleport? Oh man, can she shoot lasers from her eyes?!"

"Dustin!" Mike snaps. "Focus please."

"She's my spiritual sister," Eleven answers. "We grew up together... I think. She's Eight." The young girl then rolls up her sleeve to show her tattoo again.

"Wait, so let me get this straight," Steve sputters in disbelief. "There are more of you with these freaky powers?"

Ignoring the insult, Jane/Elven just nods.

"What can she do?" Will asks.

"Make images appear in your mind..."

"What kind of images?" Lucas inquires.

"Anything she wants. She can make it as real as she wants, but it's not really there."

"Like some kind of illusion?"

She nods.

"So... you saw... Kali and you ran after her?" Mike says, trying to piece the story together.

She nods again. "It wasn't her, it was an image and she was in trouble."

"So how are we in trouble?" Dustin asks.

"Hawkins is gone..."

"Gone, what do you mean gone?" Lucas swallows.

"That's bullshit, we're still in the woods just outside of Hawkins," Steve denies it, becoming more nervous with each of this girl's sentences. He hadn't known Eleven for very long, all he knew was that she had weird powers, Hopper had adopted her, she came from the Hawkins Laboratory, and that she'd shut the gate to the other dimension that had brought the Demogorgon to town. "I bet you we walk for a few minutes back the way we came, and we'll see my dad and Joyce's headlights."

El shakes her head but says nothing.

"Come on, we should go back before we get pneumonia," Will shivers. "Plus, my mom is probably freaking out by now."

Four of the boys begin walking back the way they had come, snapping branches, underbrush, leaves, and slipping in the wet mud as they go, but Mike stays in front of Eleven. He's not sure what has

happened and processing the fact that there are more kids with powers like hers has made him nervous. He stares into El's brown eyes, seeing fear reflecting back at him. He knows that they should probably follow, but his girlfriend remains rooted in place and refuses to go any further.

"El..." Mike says. "We should go back."

"Mike... Kali needs my help. She's in pain."

"I know, I get it, but I think we can help her if we regroup and think of a plan..."

"We can't..." she repeats.

"What do you mean we can't?"

"This is not Hawkins..." she whispers.

"Then, where are we?"

Eleven knows that the other boys should not be wandering through this dangerous forest alone. The sense of evil is all around them and who knows what kinds of creatures are out there, lurking in the darkness. Her breath catches in her throat and she abruptly grabs Mike's hand, pulling him along. This suddenly jolts forward sends a wet branch smacking into her boyfriend's face.

Shaking and spitting out the mud and leaves, Mike tries to ask something: "El, what the hell are..." he can't finish his sentence because he nearly slips and falls face first into the mud. However, she persists in dragging him so hard that his arm is nearly falling off. "El where are we going...?"

She doesn't answer, all she knows is that they have to get out of the forest. There are vines wrapping around the trunks of the trees now, something that does not happen in Hawkins. In the darkness, it casts the illusion that snakes had staked their claim upon the trees. The sounds of crickets and other night creatures, as well as the rain dripping from the leaves, creates an eerie chorus of noise that pounds on her ears. Low brush soaks and scrapes at her overalls as she pushes towards what should be an opening in the forest brush. She

can vaguely see the gray sky and possibly some stars too.

Once she finally sees open air, she gasps.

The rest of the group is also staring transfixed at where they are:

It is a large house, at least three stories or more that is almost as tall as the trees surrounding it. It has a sort of Victorian feel about it, a front porch that had two large pillars to hold up the roof. A single rocking chair can be seen rocking back and forth in the wind. There are some lovely beds of flowers covered with mulch at the base of the porch, many bushels of clovers and pansies, jasmines and morning glories sprouted from them. The front garden is relatively well kept. The grass grows a little wildly, but there were also topiary hedges, carved into long looking shapes. They were almost meant to represent giant snakes made of leaves. There is an upstairs porch/balcony that was over one of the main windows that also had a rocking chair there too. The house is also covered with ivy. It seems to grow wildly along the walls of the old house, spreading out, almost like a virus. The pointed leaves are also very big and move ever so slightly in the wind, giving the illusion that small hands are waving down at the visitors.

"What the hell?" Steve hisses under his breath. "Where are we?"

A/N: Please Follow and review, it really makes my day.

10. Chapter 9: A Bad Place

Chapter 9: A Bad Place

The group stands at the opening of the trees, completely and utterly confused. None of them recognized where they were. It wasn't Hawkins, that was for certain. The atmosphere surrounding them feels heavy and almost sinister, especially to El. She knew all of this is wrong, they weren't in Hawkins anymore; the storm had sent them to another place, another place that is radiating an evil energy.

Why did Kali try and contact me? she thinks to herself. Is this where she is? Do the bad men have her?

"What the hell?" Steve repeats, completely at his wit's end. No matter how many times he ends up babysitting this group, they always end up in the weirdest places and he's usually at the receiving end of some kind of beating or injuries.

"Where are we?" Will asks, swallowing a lump in his throat.

"A bad place," Eleven says.

All the boys look at her in horror. Steve drops his bat and gets down to her level, taking her, almost too roughly in his hands.

"What bad place?" he says, trying to keep his anger in check. He knew he shouldn't be so hard on her, she does have telekinesis, but she's the one who seems to attract the danger.

"I...I don't know," she says, unable to find the words. She was as lost as they were.

"What do mean you don't know?!" Steve says, squeezing her arms a lot tighter than he intended to. He can feel the panic rising in his body.

"Let go of her!" Mike says, stepping in, obviously seeing how uncomfortable El was in his grasp.

"Why?! She's the one who got us into this mess!" Steve says, letting

the girl go and going to the nearest tree to punch it in anger. "She had to go running off into the woods after her sister, who by the way isn't even here, made us get stuck in the fucking rainstorm, and now we're lost as hell! And now, she says our asses are in danger and she doesn't even know where or why we're here!"

"Steve, take it down a notch," Dustin says, gazing at Eleven's face, seeing the tears rising in her eyes. She hated the screaming and yelling, it reminded her of when Lucas and Mike fought, and she ended up hurting Lucas, or when she and Hopper screamed at each other because she broke the rules. She wipes a bit of blood from her nose, caused by the stress of the situation, not from using her powers. Mike puts his arm around her, trying to give her comfort and glaring angrily at Steve as he has an apparent temper tantrum

"Why?! WHY?! Why the hell should I?! She got us lost and now I'm stuck babysitting you little shits again. We're facing unknown danger and she can't even tell us why!"

"Such language will not be tolerated here," a gentle sounding voice says, scaring all of them almost half to death.

They all turn to see a woman walking towards them from across the wet grass, with a lit round lantern. She has long silver/white hair pulled back into a bun stands in front of the group. She's wrapped in a shawl, wears very old rubber boots, and has an apron wrapped around her waist as if she'd just come from her kitchen. Her eyes matched her hair, except they were much more lifeless, examining each face with curiosity. Around the eyes were layers of wrinkles, some were shallow, and others were deep, indicating that she had lived a long and possibly harsh life. The cruel test of time had not been kind to her; her expression was withered and tired. Yet, her lips are curled into a frown, obviously displeased with Steve's language.

"The English language really is becoming nothing to you children, isn't it?" she asks.

Steve steps in front of the kids, prepared to protect them, but he's glad he's at least found a human being who seems to know what's going on.

"Sorry, who are you and why are you here?" he inquires with a firm attitude.

"I'm Mrs. Baker, Andrea Baker, and you all happen to be standing on my property."

"Which is where?" Steve snaps back.

"A bad place," Eleven says quietly.

Mrs. Baker's eyes lock onto the girl's tiny face. Her gray eyes seem to harden for a second and her bushy eyebrows creep together to form an unpleasant glare. Jane swallows hard and shrinks slightly behind Mike. She knew that something is wrong with this woman. Her light glows on her face, casting sharp shadows, making her look more wicked than kind.

"It's not a bad place, but we are in the countryside," the old woman says, looking away from Eleven.

"The countryside, there's no countryside outside of Hawkins," Lucas says, fumbling with his backpack, trying to get his map out.

"Well, you must've walked further than you intended to," she says, swinging the lantern to examine each of their faces. "You poor dears must have gotten caught in the storm. Why don't you come into the house where you can all dry off?"

"Can we use your phone, or do you not have one?" Steve asks. Like Eleven, he is extremely skeptical about this creepy old woman who lives in the middle of nowhere. It has become his job once again to take care of Mike Wheeler and his friends. Why does it seem that every time shit goes sideways, he becomes the babysitter? In fact, all the kids are afraid of this woman, knowing that this would be the beginning of a horror movie if they ever knew one. Despite her gentle demeanour, something is off, really off about everything.

"Yes, of course, we have a phone, we're not that prehistoric," the woman snaps at the rude teenager. She glares at Steve with firm eyes.

Suddenly, Will starts to sneeze and shiver in his wet clothes.

"Oh, you poor dear," Mrs. Baker says sympathetically. She rushes over and puts her shawl on his shoulders. "You must all be cold from the rain, why don't you come into the house so you can dry off and I'll make you all a nice warm beverage."

"Can we borrow the phone to call our friends?" Dustin asks, his stomach growling with the thought of something warm to drink and possibly eat.

"Of course," she says. "Just follow me."

Her hunched over figure turns, taking the source of light with the movement, leaving the group in the gray gloom. The branches on the trees behind them creak like an eerie wooden door and dripping of leftover rain falls down on top of them.

"She should work in haunted houses, she'd make a killing," Dustin jokes.

Lucas stomps on his friend's foot in frustration.

"Ow, sorry geez, it was just a joke."

"I don't like this at all," Will says, he's still shivering and reluctantly pulls the woollen shawl closer around his shoulders.

"None of us do," Mike says.

"Why would she want to help us?" Steve says skeptically, staring at the woman's figure continues to retreat towards the house.

Will sneezes again and snuffles.

"If we stay out here any longer, we'll all get hypothermia," Lucas says. "I say we go in, use the phone, warm up, and then try to go back." While all of this did creep him out, the thought of someplace warm is appealing to him also.

"Beats hiking back through the woods in the dark," Dustin says. The group simultaneously turns towards the dark woods, a portal seemingly into infinite blackness. None of them wanted to go back again, plus what if it started raining again.

Eleven grabs Mike's arm and holds him tightly.

"No," she says firmly. "This is a bad place. It's dangerous."

"Dangerous in what way?" Steve asks, glaring at Eleven, knowing that she's the reason they're in this mess.

"Wrong," is all she can say.

"Well, wrong is not going to help us get back home," Steve says. "I agree with Lucas, we call for Hopper, then they come and pick us up and we can all go home."

"No!" El says.

"Then you can start hiking back," the teenager shrugs. "But I'd rather play it safe for the time being. If anything happens..." he reaches down and picks up his bat. "We'll be ready."

Four of the boys begin walking towards the house where Mrs. Baker is standing, her lantern flickering in the darkness. Mike wants to start walking, but Eleven holds him in place.

"Mike, no!" she says.

"El, I know... I hate this more than you do, but... we have to call someone. We're very lost and we need help. Besides, if we do run into trouble, you have your powers."

He gazes into her frightened brown eyes and grabs her hand, interlocking their fingers. He touches her face, wiping a stray wet curl from her cheek. He leans in and kisses her lips gently. A warmth is felt between the two of them, one of comfort and safety, despite their entire situation. He can see how frightened she is, and he knows they'll have to stay together in order to be safe.

"It will be fine..." he says quietly.

"Promise?" she whispers.

"Friends don't lie," he says with a small smile.

"Boyfriends either," Jane says.

The two share a small smile before Dustin calls out to them.

"You guys coming in or not?!"

The rest of the party, plus Steve, are already on the porch as Mrs. Baker opens the heavy oak doors to let them in. One by one they disappear inside, likely to a warm place.

Mike gives his girlfriend a small smile and then slowly begins guiding her across the wet grass to the gravel driveway. She drags her feet a bit, trying to buy herself some time. Eleven swallows a large lump in her throat. Her stomach is turning violently to the point where she might throw up. This is wrong. This is a very bad place and they're walking right into the heart of it.

A/N: Please review.

11. Chapter 10: Reptile Repeat

Chapter 10: Reptile Repeat

"Come in, come in," Mrs. Baker says as she holds the door open for Eleven and Mike. Their wet sneakers drag across a green carpet meant to look like scales or something. Steve, Will, Dustin, and Lucas are already inside but stand at the edge of the carpet unsure about where to go next.

An odd-looking chandelier hung above them in the front hall, it was made of iron and curved in odd ways. The ends were lit with lightbulbs this time. There was an archway at the end of the front hall that framed a staircase that wound upwards in a spiral pattern to the next level. The banister was carved from polished wood that shone, but also looked rough and bumpy. The place looked like it could be a rich person's home if it wasn't so creepy looking.

"Please come in, just hang your wet coats to dry," Mrs. Baker says. She hangs her shawl on a coat rack next to the door. It was an unusual coat rack as the ends of it had the heads of snakes carved from the wood.

Steve removes his dark jacket and hesitates before hanging it on one of the snakeheads. He notices that there is a red leather jacket also on the rack, which he finds extremely weird considering the old woman would likely be the last person to wear a very modern coat. He removes a single strand of blonde hair from the shoulder of the coat. There was no way that this belonged to the haggard old woman in front of him.

"Is there anyone else in the house?" Steve asks, looking for some kind of explanation for the blonde hair.

"Just my son," Mrs. Baker answers as she helps Dustin and Will hang up their coats as well.

"Does he by any chance have a girlfriend?" the eldest asks.

Mrs. Baker gives Steve a funny look and then turns to Dustin again.

"Would you like me to take your hat dear?" she asks.

"No thank you," he says, pulling it tightly over his afro of thick curls.

"All right then, how about you, young lady, would you like me to take your coat?"

Eleven just stares at the woman and takes a step back, feeling the uneasiness radiating off of her and she can see her own frightened reflection in the old crone's eyes. She shakes her head frantically and stays near the door. Mike steps in to explain.

"Sorry about E... Jane, she's really shy."

Mrs. Baker frowns firmly for a moment, but then her face softens, and she shrugs in indifference. "That's quite all right son, as long as she is comfortable and won't catch a chill, I am okay."

Jane grabs onto Mike's arm and squeezes it tightly.

"Mike," she whispers, the fear gripping her stomach.

"It'll be okay, I promise," he says as he takes a few more steps into the house.

Dustin, Lucas, and Will have ventured a bit further into the old house. The roof above them creaks almost ominously as they look at the other bizarre decorations. Almost everywhere the group looked there were either snakes or some forms of reptiles represented in some way. When one got a closer look at the banister, it was carved to look like the scaled of a snake that wound its way up with the stairs. On the left of the front hall, was a long tapestry with various lizards, snakes, and turtles woven into it. The rug in front of the staircase gave the impression of a snakeskin. There were framed diagrams of reptiles and their anatomy along the walls, several snakes' skins had been preserved in frames as well and one could now tell that the chandelier was meant to look like a swarm of snakes with lightbulbs in their mouths.

"Cool," Dustin says, gazing at one of the snake skins, amazed by how long it is.

"More like creepy," Lucas says, trying to look away from a weird looking lizard portrait, which had eyes that seemed to be following him.

Will stands at the base of the stairs, his hand running over the texture of the banister when heavy footsteps come from above and cause the young boy to step back in fear.

A man appears from wherever upstairs in the large house he had been. He descends the wooden steps, each one creaking as he went. He has large and thick wire-rimmed glasses that magnified his eyes ever so slightly. His eyes were a very dark brown, almost to the point of being black in colour and they squint at the new visitors. He wore a brown leather apron tied in the back and thick boots that punished the hardwood floor as he walked towards them. He wore a white shirt that was stained in many places and wore green gloves that looked like gardening gloves. His hair was graying ever so slightly on the edges, but it was also unkempt and tangled in places. Eleven can immediately tell that this man was bad, very bad, his eyes so beady and narrow. For a moment, their eyes meet, and she can see how menacing he truly is. He stops at the last step, looks down at Will and then at his mother Mrs. Baker.

"What's going on mother?" he asks.

"These poor children got lost in the storm," Mrs. Baker explains. "I brought them inside, so they won't catch a cold. Which reminds me, could you go get them a few dry towels, there should be some fresh out of the dryer..."

The two owners of this house share a knowing look, something that is lost on the others. But he nods and then goes back upstairs to get the towels.

"Would any of you like something warm to drink? Some coffee, or maybe some tea or hot chocolate?"

"I'd like some hot chocolate, please," Dustin says, his eyes lighting up at the prospect of sugar.

While everyone is still skeptical, the thought of warm drinks is

tempting.

"I'd like some hot chocolate," Will says.

"Make that three," Lucas chimes in.

"Four," Mike says, deciding to take advantage of the hospitality being offered.

"Would any of you like cinnamon in your hot chocolate?"

"No thank you," Will says politely.

"Sure," Dustin nods.

"Okay," Lucas shrugs.

"Whatever," Mike mutters.

"What about you fella?" she asks turning to Steve.

The "babysitter" bites his lip. "Uhm, just some coffee, please. I really don't think we should be asking..."

"No, no, it's no trouble at all, and what about you darling?" she says, turning to Jane. Eleven practically yelps in fear now that the cold gray eyes are looking at her again. She continues to shrink behind Mike, she looks down at her shoes and says nothing.

"How about just some water?" Mike suggests gently, turning towards her.

She gives a slow shaky nod and Mrs. Baker smiles warmly as she turns to go towards the kitchen.

"Wait, uh... Mrs. B, your phone?" Steve asks.

"Oh yes, of course, follow me to the phone," Mrs. Baker says. "And please take off your shoes so you don't track any mud in the house. There's also a fire going in the parlour, perhaps you can all warm up as you make your call."

"S-Sure," Mike says.

The group reluctantly obliges to the request before walking together. They follow the old woman into the kitchen, which is adjacent to the living room/parlour and sure enough, there was a large roaring fire at the end of the room framed by a large stone fireplace. But again, it was decorated with reptiles. The posts on each of the furniture were carved to look like snakes were holding up the alligator leather skinned chairs and coaches. The wallpaper in the living room had a strange pattern of lizards around it and there was a large, green rug in front of the fireplace. More snake skins were preserved and hanging on the walls. A weird looking fern sits in the corner that has vines dangling from it. Lamps that had the sculptured bases that looked like iguanas light up the entire room. What made the place even creepier was the very large alligator or crocodile head that was mounted over the fireplace. It had black, beady eyes that seemed to stare at the group, with its mouth open, large enough for someone to stick their head inside.

The kitchen looked a bit more normal, with a cast iron looking stove and large refrigerator. There was a kettle on the stove that the woman filled with water and put it on to boil some water. The wooden cupboards again were carved to look like snake skins and the woman brought down several mugs, all snake-themed around the handles.

Dustin immediately rushes forward and finds the closest seat to the fireplace and he sticks his hands near it, embracing the warmth radiating from the flames. Lucas and Will soon join them.

"The phone is over there," Mrs. Baker directs Steve, before turning to go and make the drinks.

"I have the urge to roast marshmallows," Dustin smiles. "You think the old woman has any lying around?"

"I think we're asking enough of her with the hot chocolate," Lucas says as he rubs his hands together and then takes off his bandana, unrolls it and allows it to dry by the fire.

Steve fiddles with the phone, hating that it was rotary one. "What a dinosaur, hasn't this woman ever heard of dial pads yet?"

Eleven still stands in the doorway, unsure of what to do. Mike wants to stay with his girlfriend, but he also wants to get warm.

"Come on El, it's just a fire, we need to get warm for when we go back outside again."

The only girl of the group swallows and looks up at the crocodile head mounted above the fireplace. It reminds her of the stuffed creatures that Hopper had when he was cleaning out his hunting cabin for them to live in. The beady eyes seem to watch the group, with its mouth open in a smile, something that sent further shivers down her spine. She sits on a couch, much closer to the door and wraps her coat tightly around her body, trying to protect herself from the evil that was coming from all directions.

A/N: We've been down this road before. Please review...

12. Chapter 11: All Over Again

Chapter 11: All Over Again

"This is so nice," Dustin says, rubbing his hands to warm them more. "Despite how weird everything is right now, at least we're not still lost."

"We're very lost," Mike says. "We have no idea where we are or how we're going to get home."

All the young preteens look at the adult in the group as he tries to reach someone on the phone.

"Hey Jane, what's Hopper's home phone number? I've already tried the Wheelers and I can't get through."

"Mom should've changed the number when they broke up," Mike mutters to himself.

"What was that? Care to repeat that dipshit?" Steve snaps.

"Young man I will not tolerate such language in my house," Mrs. Baker says sternly, coming into the room with a tray filled with hot drinks. She places them down on a glass coffee table. "Either you clean up your vocabulary or you can find another person's phone, are we clear?"

Steve just nods and goes back to Jane. "Jane, I need the number."

Eleven goes over to stand with the adult in the room and whispers it to him, not wanting Mrs. Baker to overhear. She keeps glancing to the doorway, wanting to get out soon. She doesn't care how warm the room is, nothing feels right.

"Awesome," Dustin says, his eyes lighting up at seeing the hot chocolate with marshmallows and whipped cream floating in the top. "Thank you so much, Mrs. B."

"You're welcome son, I hope you enjoy it," she says with a warm and fond smile.

Mike, Lucas, and Will all take their hot chocolates and take sips.

"I love the cinnamon in the chocolate," Lucas says, licking the whipped cream from his nose. "It adds more flavour to it."

"Would you like your water Jane?" the old woman offers, holding out the crystal glass to her.

The only girl of the group hesitates, her heart beating rapidly, she still looks like a deer in headlights. Her hand twitches involuntarily, trying to keep her powers under control. She reaches out and takes the glass. She stares at the clear liquid, hesitant to drink it.

"It's all right dear, it's just water," Mrs. Baker says in a voice that sends shivers up the girl's spine.

Jane doesn't have time to respond when Steve slams the phone down.

"Connection out here is sh... super shotty," he says, remembering the old lady in the room.

"It might've been the storm that disconnected the phone lines," the woman explains, going over to where Will had discarded her shawl. She lays it out on the stone ledge near the fireplace to make sure it's warm. The young Byers of the group shudders slightly. The elderly woman notices his discomfort and fetches a white blanket from a nearby chair to wrap around the boy's shoulders. "I'll get my son to check the connections in the fuse box, why don't you have some coffee and when we come back you can try again?"

"Sure," Steve says, going over to pick up the only mug left on the tray. He grimaces as the bitter tasting coffee hits his tongue, plus the mug looks like a cheap souvenir from Florida with an alligator forming the handle. He sits down in a nearby chair to enjoy the less than adequate drink, while Mrs. Baker leaves to go check the phone lines.

"Man and I thought this night had turned out to be pretty bad," Dustin says.

"Will you stop being so optimistic?!" Steve grumbles. "We're in no man's land and according to Number Eleven here, it's not Hawkins

either. I can't even get a phone signal so we're basically in the middle of nowhere with no way to call anyone."

"It could be worse; we could still be outside in the rain," Will points out, shrugging. "Instead of by a warm fireplace."

"Surrounded by Norman Bates' cousin's paraphernalia," the eldest of the group mutters under his breath.

Eleven has said nothing this entire time. She still holds the glass but has yet to take a sip. Everyone else seems to be enjoying their drinks, but she still can't shake the feeling that something is wrong with it. Nothing happened to the guys, so the scary bad woman couldn't be trying to poison them... could she?

With great reluctance, she takes a small sip of water, just to quench her thirst.

Just then, Mrs. Baker walks back in with her son not far behind her, and in his arms is a giant looking lizard. Eleven lets out a shriek and immediately runs over to Mike on the alligator skin couch, shrinking behind his shoulders. Even Steve is surprised by the large lizard that he stands up and takes a step back. The younger boys, however, immediately become fascinated.

"Whoa," Lucas says standing up to take a better look. He wobbles slightly trying to stand up straight, which is a bit weird, but he goes to take a closer look with Dustin right behind him.

The lizard has thick, dark-gray scales running all along its body and tail, with thin and almost pointy looking scales running along its spine and under its chin. It also has large claws that cling the man's thick black gloves, which he seems to be wearing for protection.

"What kind of lizard is that?" Lucas asks.

"This is your Cuban Rock Iguana," Mrs. Baker's son explains. "And he's one of the biggest I have in my enclosures."

"You mean you have more of them?" Will asks, getting a closer look.

The lizard seems to examine each of the children with interest and

seems to lunge forward slightly, it makes a hissing noise.

"Easy boy," the man says. "Sorry, this guy can get pretty territorial, which is rare in their breed. And to answer your question son, yes, I do have many more iguanas, in fact, I have a whole habitat for them. I have many more reptiles and amphibians as well. I'm a herpetologist, which means I study snakes."

"That must be a cool job," Dustin says.

"Quite... cool," the man's voice holds on the words a little too long, making everyone hesitate slightly. "I'm Doctor Nathair, but most people call me Nathan for short."

Mrs. Baker beams happily. "He's very proud of his collection of reptiles. He's well renowned in his field."

"I was able to buy this house out here to allow me to carry out my research in peace. My mother always loved the countryside, so she asked to move out here too. Now, this big guy here I call Igneous since he is a Rock Iguana."

All four boys continue to look at the massive lizard with fascination, while Eleven and Steve are more hesitant. Jane/Eleven goes up to be behind Mike, holding his shoulder, not liking this creature at all.

"So... you study these things?" Steve asks.

"I do, and I have a lot more, would you like to see my work."

"Uh... I'd really like to call our friends if that's okay," the eldest insists.

"Well, how about you make the call and I'll give the kids a tour of my facility. It won't take very long," Dr. Nathair says, a weird glint entering his eyes.

"Sure, but is it like safe for them, these things are running around, wildly are they?" the babysitter inquires.

"No, it's quite safe, they're all in cages or special terrariums," he says.

"Whatever then," Steve shrugs.

"Sweet," Dustin hollers in excitement. He, Will, Lucas, and Mike all seem pumped to learn more about these awesome lizards. "I think I have a new science project for the science fair."

"Now please don't touch anything because these creatures are territorial. Think of it as a zoo, they will bite the hand that feeds them..." the scientist insists. He stares at the boys and then looks over at Eleven. She can immediately sense something very wrong. He looks at her almost hungrily and he gives her an awkward looking smile. "Would all of you children like to join me?"

Jane steps back and tries to pull Mike with her. This is the danger she sensed before, she knew that this was very wrong and... could this be the bad man Kali was warning her about.

However, her boyfriend doesn't sense the danger and tries to explain El's strange behaviour.

"Jane doesn't like snakes or reptiles..." he says.

"That's all right dear, you can just stay out here," Mrs. Baker says gently. "But go put your shoes on before you enter."

The party rushes and comes back with their slightly drier shoes and they slip into them, Mike bringing Eleven's and Dustin bringing Steve's as well in hopes the two odd ones out might join them later. Without any further words, Nathair walks across the living room, the large Iguana still in his arms. He pushes back a red velvet curtain on the far wall, revealing heavy looking doors behind it, likely made of oak, and towered almost to the ceiling. With a large tug, he opens it with a very loud creak. Inside there are the sounds of animals, almost like a zoo, but most of the sounds were hissing, indicating that Dr. Nathair did indeed study reptiles

Dustin, Will, and Lucas follow the doctor into the room, but Eleven clings to Mike's arm.

"Mike no..." she gasps.

"It's okay El, it's just like a zoo, none of the animals can hurt you.

Come on I'll show you..." he grabs her hand and tries to pull her towards the door, but she plants her feet.

"Badman," she insists.

"He's not a bad man, a little weird, but not bad. Come on..."

Eleven refuses to move, she desperately wants to use her telekinesis to shut the door in Mike's face, but this might also trap her other friends inside and reveal her powers to these bad people. She continues to shake her head.

"No."

"It's okay if you want to stay out here, I won't be too far away I promise."

"Boyfriends don't lie," Eleven says, still staring at the door, trying to block out the sounds coming from this strange room.

"I'm not lying, look... just stay out here with Steve and call us when it's time to go okay?"

Despite how much she pulls, Mike goes through the door and Eleven can't stand it. She gets a bit closer to the heavy oak door, very afraid of what might happen. She listens and can hear the doctor man talking to her friends.

Eleven don't... she hears in her head. *Was that Kali?* At this point, she can't even tell.

Steve still struggles to get a signal on the phone, he continues swearing under his breath as he does so. Mrs. Baker has excused herself to the kitchen, leaving the two alone. Jane continues to shake erratically, her hands shaking. It's then that her head begins to pound like a heartbeat was pushing against her head. It feels just like the times she uses her powers to lift very heavy things or hold something up for a long time. She doesn't like the feeling at all and wants to leave.

She tries distracting herself by putting her shoes on, maybe it could ease the pain, but nothing seems to lift the dizzying feelings.

Suddenly, something inside Steve compels him to put the phone down and go into the room with the boys. He doesn't understand it, but his mind and body are in two places at once. He places the phone back on the receiver, puts in his shoes and walks almost robotically towards the room. He tries to fight it, but his mind becomes cloudy and his body tingles, unable to control his movements any longer.

Eleven notices Steve going into the room. She tries to grab the back of his jacket and stop him, but then he's gone. She can tell that he didn't want to go in there, but something made him do it. She swallows hard, the painful dizziness increasing in her mind as she fights the urge to go inside.

No Jane! a voice in her head calls out. *Sister don't!*

"Kali..." she whispers in confusion.

It's humid and hot in the room. It's quite big for the most part and it is almost entirely made of glass, like a greenhouse. There are tall looking trees and vines hanging from various branches, it looks almost like a tropical rainforest inside. Within the room are rows and rows of cages, many of them with bright orange heat lamps to keep the occupants of the cages nice and warm. Some cages are made of glass and there are various types of vegetation inside each terrarium. There are even some lizards and snake crawling along these large towering trees. How did they not see this massive greenhouse when they walked close to the house? There are dark shadows everywhere as Steve walks further into this enclosure, trying to find the kids. He can't control what's happening to his body as he walks towards where the other members of the group are.

Eleven is completely petrified with fear, she stops at the door but knows that she has to protect her friends. The voice in her head along with the pounding makes it almost impossible for her to think straight. She stands on the step at the entrance to the room, resisting the temptation to go any further.

Will is standing on a small, garden type bridge looking down at some of the small looking salamanders and toads that lurk in the murky waters. He's surprised that Dr. Nathair could even fit a small looking pond in this place. It was more like a nature reserve than anything

else.

Lucas is on the far side of the enclosure, looking at some large looking snakes that seem to have eyes on their scales.

Dustin is staring into a large terrarium that contains a large looking cobra, that continues to hiss at him angrily.

Mike is standing next to a large tree, staring up at some of the snakes and lizards hanging around in it, his hand grasping a low hanging vine.

Steve comes to where Dr. Nathair is placing the large iguana back in its enclosure. The young adult doesn't know what to say, he's unable to really speak. The doctor's dark eyes stare at the teenager and Steve feels a shiver go up to his spine.

"Quite the beautiful creatures, aren't they?" the scientist asks in a low creepy voice.

Steve looks down to see many different coloured iguanas sunbathing in a sort of desert type enclosure.

"Uh... sure," he says, unable to think clearly. Something is wrong, Eleven was right the entire time, this man is bad.

"It's so nice that you were able to be a part of this experience, Mr. Harrington."

"Wait how do you know my..."

Suddenly, Steve realizes that they are in way over their heads. He turns and tries to run towards the door, but his legs won't obey him. They are sluggish and feel like they are tied to cinder blocks. With all his strength he yells.

"ELEVEN, YOU WERE RIGHT WE NEED TO GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE!"

The young girl on the step nods, but she too is feeling too dizzy to think.

"MIKE!" she screams out, she raises her hand to try and protect the group, but from what she's not sure.

Steve feels his legs beginning to give way and there's a tug at his pant leg. The same giant iguana is gnawing at the fabric of his pants.

"Get...off..." he mutters before his face hits the dirt.

Suddenly the door slams behind Eleven. The girl turns in a panic. There are no handles on the other side, meaning they were trapped. Her hands claw frantically at the wood of the door as she tries to escape. The door begins to fade into the growing vegetation, vines slithering around what was once the exit, but it no longer existed. Eleven barely has time to say anything or even scream before everything goes black and she collapses to the ground.

A/N: Please review.

13. Chapter 12: The Man, Behind the Curtain

Chapter 12: The Man, Behind the Curtain

Mrs. Baker climbs the stairs up to the second storey of her home, a cup of tea rattles against its saucer, making an unusual sound that eerily echoes through the now empty house. Her footsteps sound heavy despite her frail little feet shuffling up each step. Once she's at the landing, she takes a slow sip of tea and continues down the hallway. She walks across the upper floor, down past an elegant sitting room where the moonlight is shining through a green stain glass window making the waning crescent look like a sliver of jade stone. She comes to the end of the hall to a large wooden door, which one might presume to be a linen or storage closet. She removes a key from her apron pocket, unlocks it with a loud click, and turns the heavy brass door handle.

She opens the closet, revealing a secret staircase that leads up to the third storey of the house. At the top of the stairs is a large metal door, secured with a keypad. The elderly woman punches in the code and the door slides open to allow her to enter.

The room behind the door is filled with the most bizarre equipment. Along the far wall, facing towards the back of the house, was a computer scientist's dream. The wall contains many forms of technical equipment, including computer and tv monitors displaying various types of tropical plant life on a long desk, security cameras in the corners of the room, infrared sequencing, speakers, keyboards, switches, buttons, and even a few printers are either located on desks or hanging from the ceiling. The room could possibly resemble a security guard office with all the monitors. A spaghetti tangle of wires drops down from the above or snakes between the chairs positioned in front of this mass exodus of technology. Every piece is from a different age, likely accumulated over time and all hooked up in order to work with one another. Between the space of the overhead monitors and the keyboards is a row of windows, displaying a vast area on the opposite side, which is filled with tropical plant life. The humidity of the room behind the glass also managed to accumulate on the glass in tiny water droplets as well as

a few curious tiny lizards and insects, investigating what this clear glass thing in their habitat was.

Mrs. Baker stands with her cup of tea, gazing at one of the monitors and then turns to look at the opposite end of the room. The wall is made of heavy steel, profoundly fortified and sections of the steel form a tube shape, with the glow of a faint blue colour appearing within the tubes. It flickers occasionally as the source of energy flows through the wall to power the technology and various other components of this laboratory.

To her left as the old woman stood facing the monitors was a door, with a single circular window. It too had a keypad in order to access it. Just then, strange beeping comes from the opposite side of the door. Mrs. Baker turns as the door slides open.

Her son, Dr. Nathair comes into the main computer room having secured their sedated prisoner. He locks the room with another press of a button and he smiles wickedly at his mother.

"How many do we have now?" Mrs. Baker asks,

"Ten in total," the doctor says, walking over to the technology wall and pulling up a computer screen with pictures of the subjects that were now in his terrarium. Each one had statistics retaining their power and current vitals. There is a heart rate monitor tracking all those who are about to be victims in his tests. He then checks another screen that appeared to be scanning like a sonar radar. "With a few more about to encounter a very similar storm. I hope you're ready for that." He points to several distinct blips on the screen.

"I'm always ready, the towels are drying as we speak."

"How is your supply of sedatives? Do you need more?"

"No dear, I have plenty."

"Good... the best part is that the coming group are already enemies with one another and several do have magic."

"Magical conflict in the terrarium, that's never happened before."

"It will definitely bring more power to the lab," Dr. Nathair grins, inhaling sharply with great pleasure.

"Should we be worried about damage to the system or facility? This is untested territory."

"Yes it," the doctor chuckles to himself. "Isn't it amazing, we've been waiting a long time for something like this." His fists shake in uncontrolled joy.

"What about the subjects? How far away are they from one another?"

The insane doctor sits in a rolling chair and slides to the opposite end of the technology station. His mother follows him and takes a sip of her tea as he does his computer typing.

"With the amount of power these subjects are feeding into the room, it's expanding quite quickly, making them extremely far apart already." He bites his lip to hide his smirk. "My babies will have the best home imaginable, plus new toys to play with."

He lets out a loud excited laugh as he shows the dimensions of the expanding facility to his mother. She, of course, doesn't understand half of what's appearing on screen but laughs along with him. Dr. Nathair then reaches down into a nearby terrarium and allows a yellow and blue Garter snake wraps itself around his arm. It now appears as though he has the most colourful armband.

"Oh, my sweet little girl, Daddy is so proud of himself, yes he is," he coos at the creature.

The snake's tongue sticks out to test the air and tightens its grip as if in response to its master giving it fond attention. He then continues to work with the snake around his arm:

"The only problem is two of them figured out what was going on pretty quickly and passed out near the doorway," he states. "It wasn't easy hiding those two from one another."

"Right, that Crystal girl and Jane," the old woman says.

"Her name is actually Eleven."

"A number instead of a name? How do you know?"

"According to her spirit sister, all the subjects of Hawkins lab have their number tattooed on the inside of their wrists."

"Which number is Kali?" Mrs. Baker asks.

"She's eight, and this one is eleven. Apparently, they knew each other while growing up in the lab."

"How terrible it is for those scientists to keep the girls cooped up like that and with only numbers instead of names."

The two look at one another and smile, knowing the hypocrisy of that statement.

"Regardless, it won't be hard for either of them to run into some of the pets. After all, there is no way in or out now..."

"What about the pirate? He seemed to figure things out pretty quickly too. He didn't even drink the water I gave him..."

"Right, which made my job harder by having to hit him with a blow dart and reveal that I knew his true identity," the scientist huffs in frustration.

"I'm sorry Nathan, but I can't force the subjects to drink like that, it will cause suspicion."

"You're right Mother, I'm sorry."

"It's all right dear, but what I don't understand is why you're keeping the pirate out of the room," the woman asks.

"He's got an easy advantage with the hook; I don't want any of my babies getting hurt and besides I need one of them for experiments."

Mrs. Baker nods in agreement, staring over from where her son had likely locked up the fabled Captain Hook. "I still cannot believe that there really are fairy tale characters existing in the modern realm."

"It is quite eye-opening; the Emma subject is the daughter of Snow

White and Prince Charming, while the Crystal subject is the daughter of Rumpelstiltskin. To think, those stories you read me at bedtime Mother were real."

"It's so fascinating."

"It really is and think of the kind of power they will bring."

"Speaking of which, if you're worried about the specimens being harmed, doesn't the younger girl... Jane has telekinesis?"

"She does indeed, very strong telekinesis."

"And that doesn't worry you?"

"It feeds the generator, making everything more powerful," the doctor says, licking his lips in pure delight as if almost tasting the power.

"And what about the blonde and brunette from Storybrooke?"

"Oh, they have magic, very strong magic, which equals even more power. Fortunately, their mere presence is expanding the room right now, making it more dangerous and hazardous for everyone involved." He wheels over in his chair to the blue steel tube on the wall and points to it. "Once they wake up, the generator will be fed more and more."

"But what if they use their abilities to fight back?"

"I'm anticipating it. The more creatures they fight and defeat, the vaster and stronger the generator will become and the more difficult it will be to escape."

"If you just wanted the ones with power, why bring those boys and that little author into it."

"It's feeding time remember?"

"Ah Yes," Mrs. Baker says, taking another sip of her tea. "Nathan are you sure the system is ready for this kind of test?"

"Positive Mother, this is what I've been waiting for my whole life. All

the endless hours building and creating, to have everything and wield this power! Just imagine it, what we could do if these tests succeed!"

He tosses his head back, laughing very loudly and so hard that he nearly falls out of his chair. His dark eyes are wide with excitement and seem to be filling with tears from the energy he has. He licks his lips again, gaining the insatiable appetite for what is going to happen.

"Shall I hook Kali up to the machine?" Mrs. Baker asks, ready to go into the next room.

"No need Mother, it's already done. Her illusionary telepathy will bring so much more to this. We do not have to anything, all we need to do is sit back and observe. Everything is falling into place."

Dr. Nathair goes to the monitor where all the subjects' vitals are being monitored.

"They'll be waking up any time now and then let the games begin!"

A/N: We get to see what Dr. Nathair is up to. How much will he be pulling the strings? How mad do you think this scientist is?

14. Chapter 13: Sing it Again

Chapter 13: Sing it Again

Crystal opens her eyes. She's hit with bright light and blurs of green. She blinks again but the world feels like it's still turning. Her head is throbbing to the point where it feels as though her brain might explode. The heavy sounds of her heartbeat echo in her ears. She can feel the hot, humid air burning her lungs; it feels as though it's suffocating her. Sweat is also beading heavily on her forehead. Her body is heavy to the point where she doesn't know if she has the strength to get up, or that she wants to. This pain is tearing through her body like a hot scythe through the wheat, it scorches every part of her. She shuts her eyes again to block out the light.

In the Reptile Room...

She cautiously reaches her hands out and feels the ground surrounding her. It's soft... like mud. She tries to think back to what happened. She remembers the car landing in a ditch, being approached by the creepy old woman, being given tea, feeling like the world was caving in around her, trying to escape a room...

But the room didn't have dirt or mud or whatever it was. None of this makes any sense.

Suddenly, something wet and sticky tickles the side of her face. She winces and tries to scratch what was irritating her... however, as she did so, her hand brushes up against something rough and thin as she tries to scratch her face... It couldn't be wider than a test tube or a piece of rope. Crystal's hand hovers over where the irritating itch is coming from... she's hesitating about touching this... thing, whatever it was. However, curiosity gets the best of her and she touches the long thing again. She can feel the roughness, it has a sort of pattern it almost feels... scaly.

It is then that a hissing sound enters her ears. Crystal lets out the most blood-curdling scream once could ever imagine as she jumps to her feet, the adrenaline kicking in. She grabs the long, thin snake and tosses it as far as her arms will allow. Her heart hits overdrive in

absolute fear; sweat beads on her forehead and her breathing is intensely erratic, to the point that she's hyperventilating.

In the Reptile Room... where the baby screams

Now that she's fully awake and off the ground, the daughter of Rumpelstiltskin looks around in horror. She has no idea where in the world she is.

There are large trees that tower above her, covered in thick pieces of moss, creepers, and vines. The trunks are as wide as the length of a car and taller than any skyscraper in New York. Birds have taken flight from the noise she made, leaving the gnarly, thick branches seem to do little to filter out the bright light, but it wasn't natural light, it was fluorescent, pale, but still very intense. There are plants of all shapes and sizes surrounding these trees; thick brush, tropical plants, and maybe even some cacti. However, none of the plants look normal, like the kind you might see in a rainforest or on a nature hike. The leaves had various colours within them, some were as big as Crystal's own face, and none of it helped to explain this scene. The ground beneath her feet is covered with mud, rocks, dead vegetation, and most importantly of all... snakes.

Crystal's heart is in her throat as she watches a large snake with inky black skin and long, sharp looking fangs crawls past her, curling its body in and out as it goes on its way. It looked incredibly deadly, with green eyes that watched the surrounding natural land for any signs of predators. It took all her strength not to scream out again.

"What the hell is this place?" Crystal gasps in horror. They should have listened to Killian when he said not to stay the night... Allowed to be taken in by this woman's alleged kindness, now... now she was alone, in the strangest place.

But the last thing she remembers... trying to get to the door of a sort of greenhouse type room...but there were vines curling around it, making it disappear. This is not the room she remembers passing out it. There is no way in hell that it was... yet. Crystal could still feel the intense energy around her; the exact energy that she'd felt when the four of them had stepped into this bizarre and twisted nightmare.

She leans against a tree, trying to gather any of her remaining bearings. She wipes sweat from her brow and tries to catch her breath.

Weirder creatures loom than in all of your dreams

A strange looking snake, with eyes on its scales, slithers down another tree and past the young adult. She presses herself against the in shock and unease. It was as if it was a hallucination. What was once a decent sized greenhouse had expanded into this vast landscape and thick jungle, like everything, had just transformed into Jumanji. It seemed to become bigger overnight, a maze of wilderness and now snakes...

"Snakes," she hisses. "Why does it have to be snakes?"

Then her mind snapped to something else. Emma, Killian, and Henry! They were all missing! The last thing she remembers is hearing Killian talk to the whacko scientist... a mad scientist is a better term, and the daughter of the Dark One is now suddenly alone in this crazy world. She opens her hand and conjures up a fireball. She sighs in relief that the one good thing in all of this psychotic realm was that her magic was still working so fighting back against... whatever the hell this stuff was, would not be a problem.

In the reptile room... hither and thither

Suddenly, there's a crack from behind her, Crystal snaps over letting her hands light up in anxiety and fear. Was it another freaky looking snake coming to attack? She goes to the edge of the tree and peers into the thick jungle foliage behind it. It was so dense and tangled, that not even a machete could penetrate through it.

"Who's there?" she calls.

Her hands flicker with the unease her entire body felt, plus she was most likely just getting over being drugged by that evil woman. She steps away from the tree.

The sound of another twig snapping is heard but in a different direction.

"Whoever you are... come out and fight!" Crystal says bravely. She had to suck it up, the others from Storybrooke needed her and they had to get out of this nut house.

The young woman suddenly feels that she is being thrown against a tree by some kind of invisible force. She grunts in pain by the immense pressure she feels all over her body. It's a long moment of trying to breathe before the force seems to release her and she lands in the mud beneath the giant tree. She is stunned but not knocked out. She gazes around frantically, looking for the source, but there is nothing but Jumanji jungle. Anticipating a fight, she gets up and her hands light up again.

"Who are you?! Show yourself!" she screams out into the wild vegetation.

Rumpel's daughter creates a shield around herself just in time to feel the brunt of yet another attack. Something powerful is pressing harshly against her defence, but she can't see what it is. Fighting against it is not easy, but with no way of knowing who or what it was, she had to do something to fight back.

Crystal lets her anger take over and fill her up completely. Normally, she hates using her shockwaves because of how dangerous they were, but in this situation, the attacker would never see it coming.

She thinks about her mother's death and a wicked voice began to fill her thoughts... taunting, teasing and tormenting her mind, causing a severe emotional reaction. It isn't until she hears this word...

Dearie

That all hell breaks loose. The power expands outward from her body, slicing creepers from their vines, leaves from their stems and making the mud beneath her crumble slightly with its sheer intensity. She hears the thud of a body behind another group of trees. Knowing she's gotten her assailant, she goes to investigate further.

As she pushes back from wide leaves, it is not what she expected.

A girl lays on the muddy ground stunned from the shockwave attack.

The girl had hair that at one point must've been shaved, as it seems to be growing in unruly large curls that stick to her head because she's been sweating. Her wild hair is dark brown in colour, to match her eyes. She was wearing what looked a hoodie and fashions that must have come out of the 1980s, including a pair of overalls. A dribble of blood is coming out of her nose. She's blinking in confusion and panting heavily, trying to shake off this bizarre attack. She'd never felt anything like it before.

Feeling bad for hurting this girl, Crystal steps over some gnarled roots growing out of the ground and goes to help. She offers her hand to the girl, but she bats it away looking very angry once she sees who had attacked her.

"W-Who are you?" Crystal gasps at the girl. Her face was a total mystery, but Rumpel's daughter assumed that she was another prisoner of the mad scientist and his mother.

The younger girl's brown eyes go wide for a moment, a look of a deer in headlights. She stares at Crystal's chest for a long time, much longer than one might assume. She doesn't seem to strike back and is merely frozen in place.

Unsure of why this stranger is staring at her chest, she looks down to see the golden locket that once belonged to her mother has been opened, most likely from the fall against the tree. The girl gazes at it as if hypnotized. She reaches up, Crystal flinches thinking she's going to attack again, allowing her hands to light up. But the girl merely points at the picture with a shaky hand.

"Mama?" the girl asks in a weak voice.

"Uh, yeah, that's my mother, her name was Lillian... Who...Who are you?" The daughter of the Dark One holds her necklace for a moment before shutting the latch, her hands still glowing purple.

The wide brown eyes then go to the glowing purple light emanating from this stranger's hands.

"You... are like me?" the girl asks.

"Do you have magic too?"

"Magic?" the girl says in confusion. "Magic isn't real. Mike told me that"

"It is where I come from. Who is Mike and who are you?"

"The Upside Down?"

"What?"

"Are you from the Upside Down?"

"N-No whatever that is, I'm from Storybrooke Maine... Earth if that's what you want to know."

Crystal, while confused offers her hand again. This time the girl takes it, although reluctantly. She pulls the preteen to her feet. She then begins to wipe the mud from her overalls.

"Mike... My friends! My friends are missing!"

"You're missing them too?"

"You have friends?"

"Yes, a woman with blonde hair and white light coming from her hands, a man with a beard and piece of metal where his hand should be and a teen with your kind of haircut."

An eyebrow goes up in confusion, not used to the sarcasm of Crystal Lillian Miller.

"What is this place?" the girl asks.

"I wish I knew. I probably know just as much as you"

"That woman... that old woman..."

"You saw her too?" Crystal gasps.

The girl nods. "She is no friend."

"No, and her son, he is some kind of scientist or monster or something. They trapped me and my friends here."

Like Papa, the younger girl thinks but says. "Mine too. I have to find them."

Crystal grabs the girl's arm to stop her from running off. "We need to be smart about this, we can't just run off into the jungle, it's like Jumanji met the Amazon and had snake babies."

"Jumanji?"

"Not important, this place is crawling with snakes and who knows what else. I think we need to stick together. That way we can find our friends and then get the hell out of here."

The girl looks at the young adult with confusion at first and then understanding.

"Stick together like friends?"

"Uh... sure, friends and allies, I'm Crystal by the way. Crystal Miller," holding her hand out for the girl to shake.

The stranger steps back for a moment but then accepts the hand. "I'm Jane... but I usually go by Eleven."

A/N: I made a reference to the book that inspired this story. See if you can figure out what it is. Please follow and review.

15. Chapter 14: Moving Forward

Chapter 14: Moving Forward

"So... Eleven..." Crystal says as the two of them begin walking through the thick, snake-infested jungle world. "Where did you and your friends come from?"

"Hawkins, Indiana."

"Hawkins... Indiana never heard of it."

"It's a small town. It's not very special, a lot of people probably haven't heard of it."

"Speak for yourself, the town I live in is even smaller and you've probably never heard of it because it's hidden by a magical shield to prevent outsiders from appearing. And it is, pretty damn special."

"But Mike says that magic isn't real."

Crystal sighs, knowing that she's going to have to prove that her magic is real to this girl. Being from the Land Without Magic, obviously, most people wouldn't believe in it. In fact, she didn't believe it for the longest time herself. She knows she doesn't have time for this, but the sooner the girls can learn to trust one another, the sooner they can get out of this hell hole.

"Just stand here and I'll show what I can do," she says.

The young adult stands in perfect view of Eleven, ensuring that there are no further tricks involved. She snaps her fingers.

...

Meanwhile, in the control room, Dr. Nathair becomes excited, watching things from his mother. His head looks to the large generator on the wall and sure enough, the windows in the tube are glowing with chrome blue light.

"Oh yes!" he says maniacally. "Feed my machine daughter of the

Rumpelstiltskin! Feed it!"

Mrs. Baker sits next to her son at one of the control panels, having nearly dropped her cup of tea with her son's sudden outburst.

"Nathan, please calm yourself."

"Sorry, mother, but she's feeding the generator. The world will become bigger and we can unleash more horror on them."

"Yes, yes dear, all in good time. Let her finish."

...

Jane/Eleven blinks in absolute horror as the girl vanished right before her very eyes. She instinctively puts her hands up, prepared for an attack. This girl, Crystal is abandoning her to be eaten by snakes or crocodiles or lizards. Hopper was right, she should learn not to trust strangers so easily! She begins to get angry and searching around herself, waiting for some kind of creature, or Crystal to come and attack her.

"Up here," Eleven hears from above.

The girl looks up to see Crystal sitting on some high tree branches, perched almost like a bird. Eleven cannot believe what has just happened. There is no way her ally would have had time to climb the tree so quickly and without her seeing it. But... magic didn't exist... it wasn't possible

"How... how did..."

Suddenly, she's gone again, and Crystal reappears behind the girl in a puff of lilac coloured smoke. Eleven flinches and accidentally launches her new ally against a tree.

A sharp pain enters her back as she falls from the tree onto the muddy ground. The young adult grimaces, feeling the wind being knocked out of her, as she slowly begins to push herself up into a sitting position.

"Sorry!" the younger girl cries out, rushing over to help. Once

Crystal's in a sitting position, she winces from the large bruises likely forming next to her spine. She figures she's lucky that her spine wasn't snapped in half.

"Telekinesis..." the adult says, gasping through the pain. "Interesting power."

"I'm sorry... I get scared and I..." she says, her eyes filling with tears and a small bit of blood begins running out of her nose.

"It's fine Eleven, it happens to the best of us, especially when you don't have control." She then waves her hand over her body, ensuring that Jane can see that her hand is glowing purple as she does so. It takes a moment, but then the pain subsides from her body and she's back to full strength again. She then stands up, completely healed. "But you're going to need to save your strength if we're going to get out of here."

She then conjures up a tissue from thin air, in a cloud of purple smoke, and hands it to the young girl to wipe her nose.

"It's not easy," the girl with curly hair admits.

Crystal puts her hand on Eleven's shoulder. "It's never easy Jane... or Eleven..."

"You can call me El, all my friends do,"

"Okay... El? Trust me, it took a long time for me to gain control of my powers. And believe me, I've destroyed a few things while I was learning. I once accidentally blew up a mailbox, and another time, I shattered a wall of glass without very little effort."

Eleven looks confused, hesitant, and slightly amazed by this information all at the same time. Aside from Kali, she'd never met someone who had the same kind of powers she did. Someone who could understand how hard it is to control them and to not feel like a freak for being born with these abilities. While none of her friends ever teased her, they often thought it was the coolest thing ever, she hated that sometimes she felt so different. Once and a while, she just wanted to be normal like everyone else. Her gift made her special,

but it also made her very different from "normal" humans.

"And another time, I was strong enough to throw a car at my father."

"Really? You threw it at your Papa?"

"Well, my Papa was hardly the ideal father. Where I come from, he's known as the Dark One, the embodiment of all evil."

"My Papa did bad things to me... he locked me up and used me for science."

"He experimented on you?!" Crystal gasps in shock. "Like a lab rat?"

Eleven just nods, biting her lip to hold back her emotions.

"Just like this psycho is doing to us now," the young adult realizes.

"He's not my Papa any more, I have a better one, Hopper."

"You're lucky, but I've got you beat for World's Worst Dad. My dad wanted to eat my heart in order to regain the magic he'd lost from getting my mom pregnant."

The younger girl's face distorts in horror, especially because of how casually Crystal is talking about it. While her Papa had used her for his own selfish purposes, including kidnapping her from her real mother, and attempting to kill her and her friends, nothing compares to someone wanting to eat another person. That's Demogorgon savagery, the stuff nightmares were made of. What kind of father would want to do that to his own child?

"Bad man..." is all she can say in response to this.

"Oh yeah, I never let him forget that. The good thing is, he never actually did it. My mom managed to escape and protect me. Anyways, he's come a long way since then. He's not so bad anymore because he's made an effort to change and become a better person."

The mentioning of a mother makes Jane's stomach twist. At least, Crystal grew up with her mother. She wishes that her mother, Terry had managed to escape and protect her. Then maybe she'd have a

normal life like her friends. She fights back the tears in her eyes at the thought and focuses on the last part of her ally's statement.

"He changed?"

"Yes, that is how I was able to forgive him and move on."

"But don't you want him to pay?" Eleven asks, remembering everything that Kali had told her about the schemes her and her gang were performing to exact revenge on those people who hurt them and making them suffer for their sins.

"Oh, believe me, El, I wanted to make him pay dearly for what he'd done but... when he told me that he loved my mother and regretted his actions, I realized that hurting him would not bring my mother back and it wouldn't make me feel any better. In fact, I'd turn into the villain that he was. I'd become no better than the monster he had been. Revenge and anger are like a poison inside our bodies, it turns us into things that no one can recognize. It makes you do things that you will regret, and it cannot change what happened to you. It's healthier to forgive and move forward."

Don't listen... Eleven hears inside her mind. She knows immediately that it is Kali speaking to her. The connection seemed very strong like she is not too far away.

"Forgive?"

"Yeah, I forgave him and now he's the dad I always wanted as you got with Hopper."

The mention of moving on and not taking revenge is something that Eleven agreed with. It's what made her stop Kali from killing that lab technician back in Chicago. It's just not right to hurt someone because you are hurting. That's what Papa did, and she is not Papa.

Eleven... don't listen... For once, Jane ignores the voice.

"Speaking of moving forward, we need to try and track down everyone and hopefully find a way out of this hell hole."

"Can your magic... help?" Eleven asks quietly.

"Hopefully, it can, but we need to save our strength. There's no telling what kind of creatures are roaming around in here."

"Monsters?"

"Probably, and whatever else Nathair can throw at us. God, it's like the Hunger Games."

"Hunger Games."

"It's a movie. Have you ever heard of it?"

The girl shakes her head. Crystal begins to wonder if where this girl came from. Most people have at least heard of this movie or franchise. Her mind begins to connect the dots; the outdated clothing, not knowing about current things. Is it possible? Emma and Hook did it once...

"El?"

"Yeah?"

"What year do you think it is?"

"1985."

Oh geez! The young adult thinks in horror. *They really are from a different time.*

"Why?"

"I- I think that lightning storm, the one I think Nathair created, brought you forward in time."

"How?"

"I don't know how. Time travel is extremely complicated and hardly possible, even in the best of circumstances..." She pulls her phone from her pocket. "Do you know what this is?"

Eleven looks at the device in great confusion. It had numbers on the bottom, just like a phone, but it was tiny, and it had a screen on it.

She'd never seen anything like it before.

"Phone?" she guesses.

"Yeah, it is a phone. A cell phone. These were invented in the 1970s, but now almost everyone has one that can fit in their pocket."

"When... when are you from?"

"2017," Crystal answers. "Basically, I'm from the future."

Both girls' heads begin to hurt with the sheer idea that they were from different time periods, while Crystal had no doubt seen weirder things and knew about time travel, Eleven did not. The idea that this mad doctor pulled them from their own time streams is mind-bending.

"Is the future nice?" Eleven asks.

"Let's focus on the task at hand and not open that can of worms. I never thought time travelling of any kind is possible. Hopping between realms, sure, but time jumping."

"I never thought magic was possible."

"And most people think that you having telekinesis would not be possible, or that fairy tale characters were real, but here we are."

"My head hurts," Jane complains.

"Mine too, I think it's best to worry about our friends first and worry about the space-time continuum later. Damn does Nathair have a big mess to clean up!"

...

"That's what you think... that's what you think," the doctor grins.

A/N: Please let me know what you think.

16. Chapter 15: Don't Light the Fuse

Chapter 15: Don't Light the Fuse

A/N: The group from Descendants are finally making an appearance. I am limiting the group to Mal, Evie, Carlos, Jay, Ben, Uma, Harry and Gil, since we already have so many characters in play already. Sorry if this chapter is short.

"Mal, I really don't think we should be doing this," Ben says, with lots of reluctance in his voice. "The royal guards should be dealing with Uma." The son of King Beast and Queen Belle does not want to endanger anyone, especially with the presence of Ursula's daughter now in his kingdom. He can remember all too clearly what happened when he went to apologize to Mal on the Isle of the Lost and getting captured by Uma and her crew, which ended in a sword fight. And then at the Royal Cotillion, he had been lucky to find a non-violent solution for that, but he wasn't sure if third time would be the charm. He knew that Uma was after something and the daughter of Ursula would stop at nothing to get what she wanted.

He had initiated a lockdown of Auradon Preparatory School's grounds, making sure everyone stayed inside for their own safety, he was going to be sending the guards out after the rogue Villain Kid (VK), but Mal, his true love and girlfriend, has been persistent in her solving the problem and not involving anyone else.

"Ben..." the daughter of Maleficent insists, looking him directly in the eyes. "You of all people should know how dangerous she can be and if she's in Auradon... she has access to magic." The girl with long purple hair gazes out into the graying darkness, ignoring the rough waves coming off the shore and the wind rustling through the trees. She kept on a brave face, knowing that Uma was plotting something. The two girls had been rivals on the Isle but were now enemies after the slimy sea witch had attempted to break her and Ben up.

Both of them swallow hard, silently agreeing that this was a very large problem that the VKs were more likely to solve than the royal guards ever could. They stare out at the landscape of "their" kingdom, thick black storm clouds begin rolling in off the horizon of the ocean.

It made the domed field over the Isle of the Lost that much more frightening, even though it was always covered in dark clouds due to the evil underneath the force field.

"I really think we should wait out this rain," Ben says. "It looks like it's going to pour buckets, there'll be no way that we'll find Uma in this weather."

"I know," Mal answers. "But it's too risky to let her roam free any longer than she already has."

"The rain will ensure that she'll stay hidden," the king of Auradon suggests. "No one in their right mind would be out in this weather."

"But she's not in her right mind and she's also part octopus and shrimp, she lives in water. This is her element... it's perfect for her"

"Mal..."

"Ben, I know you want us to stay safe, but she will attack when we least expect it."

Just then, three more VKs show up.

"We just got your message," Evie says, who is Mal's best friend and the daughter of the Evil Queen. She pushes some of the bangs from her face as her long blue hair is waving in the strengthening winds. "Are you sure it was Uma?"

"There's no denying her scent," Mal grimaces.

"Did they see where she went?" Carlos, the son of Cruella De Vil asks.

"The Auradon Swim Team said they saw her turn from her octopus form into human and then walking into the woods. But that's not all."

"What?" Jay, the son of Jafar, inquires.

"There were two more people with her. They joined her, having rowed in on a raft. They said one of them had long black hair and something curved and silver in his hand, and the other was tall and had blonde hair."

"Harry and Gil," Evie grimaces.

"How did they get off the island?" Jay asks.

"We'll ask them that when we get them," Mal insists, biting her lip. Her eyes light up a bright green, indicating that her magic and dragon side were acting up.

"Fortunately, we will not go in there unarmed," Jay says, revealing a duffle bag on his shoulder. He opens it up to reveal a bag full of swords that he "borrowed" from the school's Swords and Shields team. Everyone grabs a sword except for Ben.

His hazel-green eyes look down at the last remaining weapon and then up at his friends. He could see the determined looks on their faces. He doesn't want anyone getting hurt... but as the King of Auradon, not all problems could be solved with diplomacy and paperwork.

He sighs deeply.

"Okay, let's do this... and hurry."

A/N: Anyone recognize the title of this chapter? Who do you think has started the storm? This all seems a little too familiar, doesn't it?

17. Chapter 16: Trust in Allies and Friends

Chapter 16: Trust in Allies and Friends

"God it's hot as hell in here," Crystal mutters, pulling her shirt away as it's sticking to her body. It also doesn't help that she had been dressed to return to Maine, which was still pretty cold despite spring having already begun. She decides to do a quick change of clothes but steps out of view for the sake of Eleven, not to shock her any further. In a puff of lilac smoke, she's better equipped for whatever the jungle can throw at them, including proper shoes, as she'd left her own back in Mrs. Baker's house, and now a backpack filled with supplies that they will need to survive out here.

Eleven struggles to keep up, constantly stumbling over tree roots and other holes in the ground. But agrees with the girl's statement. The heat is unbearable, and she's never experienced this kind of weather before. There was some contrast to the Upside Down, which was cold and constantly raining ashes and other substances that also contained dangerous creatures, while here it seemed to be raining water on them, but also contained dangerous creatures. More specifically snakes and other reptiles... lots of them.

When El had attempted to put her hand against a tree to catch her breath, she touched the tail of some strange looking lizard, which turned around and let out a horrific shriek, the sound of a banshee, that scared both of them half to death. Fortunately, the girl had used her telekinesis to fling the creature into some greenery and they hadn't heard from it since.

After making the magical change, the girls notice that it's becoming darker, despite this place being inside a greenhouse with no method or way of changing sunlight and other atmospheric elements. But hopefully, that means the jungle will cool off a bit, enough for them to get a little sleep.

"We should probably make camp for the night," Crystal says aloud, finding a tree with thick and gnarled roots that were raised above the ground so that neither of them would have to sit in the mud. It also had thick foliage, which would likely provide them with cover in case

it starts to rain. Wiping another thick layer of renewed sweat from her face, she sits down and then pretends to reach into her backpack, but is really conjuring up two canteens of fresh water. She immediately begins downing as much of the cool liquid as she can, quenching her thirst and relieving her dry throat. She then holds out the second canteen to Eleven, inviting her to join under the tree.

With some hesitation, the younger of the two girls comes and sits down, accepting the water. She's still unsure about whether she should drink it, especially since it was conjured out of nowhere; could it have some sort of bizarre magical poison in it that will turn her into a toad or worse? Would it make her magical too? While Dustin would find that immensely cool, she doesn't need to be even more of a freak than she already is.

"We need to save our strength," she explains. "It's important to stay hydrated. The human body can go weeks without food, but only a few days without water. You can drink as much as you want, I can resupply it no problem."

Eleven stares at the canteen for a long few moments before sniffing the water and then taking a sip. It didn't taste any different from regular water, and the coolness was a welcome change from the humid dankness surrounding them.

The daughter of Rumpelstiltskin wanted to better equip Jane/Eleven for the journey, but she's afraid that using her magic will spook the girl too much. She had already reacted poorly the first time she showed her magic, so she decided to use it sparingly for the time being. There was a need to build some trust and familiarity between the two, and Crystal knew that this would only come with time. She senses the younger girl's discomfort and is trying to prompt the shy individual into joining her like she often did with kids at the daycare in New York. While they were travelling with each other, the two of them were strangers from different periods hiking through the forest and trying to survive this horrible ordeal that they were now trapped in. It's clear that this girl still had the sense of wide-eyed innocence and anxiety of being in a strange place with an unfamiliar person; very common in young children, but with Eleven, this was most likely coming from her years being imprisoned in some laboratory...

The entire idea of being experimented on for most of your life is horrifying, and this is coming from a girl whose father tried to eat her heart. Not only was the girl treated like a lab rat instead of a human, but she was unable to do and experience things that most children would; like interacting with people her own age or being shielded from the realities of the real world.

It's then that Crystal realizes that they may not have to rehydrate and buckle down to survive if she can just teleport them out of this hell hole, but again she doesn't want to scare Jane too much. She decides to test her teleportation elsewhere and if it works, then go back and get Eleven. From there, the two could locate their friends and finally get out of this... reptile room.

"I'm... going to get some firewood," the daughter of the Dark One lies. "To cook food on... not to get us sweating again"

There is an awkward silence between them before Crystal stands up, leaving her backpack behind in case Eleven needed something from it and goes over into another thicket, just beyond the large tree they had taken refuge under. She could feel the young girl's eyes watching her as she left. She prayed Eleven didn't think she was abandoning her in the jungle.

Once she was clear and out of sight, Crystal prepares to teleport herself back to the living room of Mrs. Baker's and Dr. Nathair's household. She tries to picture the image in her head; based on the best that her memory can recall considering she'd had an insane headache during the entire time spent in there and didn't get a good look at the surroundings. She inhales sharply and waves her hand. Rumple's daughter opens her eyes, expecting to be out of the humid climate and back in the living room, but she's still there... nothing happened. She tries again, shutting her eyes tightly and trying to activate her magic. She wanted to get out of here and find her family.

However, still, nothing happens. In fact, at that moment, Crystal can feel her body tingling and suddenly the headache returns. The pulsing causes her to go down on her knees in pain. She gasps, trying to collect her thoughts as she can feel that familiar energy again, like what she'd felt back in the Baker house. Her head feels as though it's being split open and her hands are lighting up, indicating her magic

is out of control. She tries to steady herself, taking in deep breaths and shutting out the rest of the world.

After several agonizing moments, her hands stop glowing and the pain slowly begins to subside from her head and body. She gasps again, completely in the dark about what happened. The same sensation from before and it somehow blocked her magic. Whatever Nathair was screwing around with, it was powerful enough to prevent her from leaving this place... and something else. She wasn't sure what it was, and she was almost afraid to find out.

Slow to recover, Crystal decides to do what she had claimed to be doing in the first place, but instead of using magic, she just breaks off sticks and finds wood in the nearby brush. She has a nasty encounter with a yellow snake, but fortunately, it slithers away before she could attack it or even scream.

Eventually, she reemerges from the greenery to find Eleven exactly where she'd left her, staring out into the jungle, likely afraid of what might jump out. Crystal then digs a bit of a hole to contain the fire and to avoid it from spreading and then lays the wood in a teepee formation like she'd seen on survival shows before. She then pretends to go through her backpack, and despite the hesitation of using magic, conjures up a lighter and some tissues to use to help the wood catch.

The first few attempts to get a fire going are not that successful, but eventually, there is a nice small fire going, filling the area near the large tree with the smell of smoke, which is oddly comforting for the both of them.

As she's tending to the fire, Crystal turns to find Eleven scrolling through the photos on her phone. At first, the older girl wonders how she got access to it without a password but then remembers that a person could access pictures by swiping to the right.

The look on the girl's face is one of confusion, but also great curiosity. She was fascinated by what this tiny little device could do; after all, in 1985, they only had brick-sized phones that could barely get a signal, even with the long antenna. Crystal decides to sit closer to as the girl's wide eyes gaze upon the happy images saved in this

phone.

"Who's this?" Eleven asks, showing a selfie image of Crystal and Belle at the beauty's birthday party. The two wear silly party hats and have noisemakers in their mouths.

"That's my step-mother, Belle."

"She's pretty,"

"That's what her name means," Crystal smiles.

"Huh?"

"Her name in French means beautiful, hence the whole reason for the movie *Beauty and the Beast*."

"What's that?"

"The Disney movie?" the older girl prompts, a little confused as to why the girl doesn't know about this classic.

"What's Disney?"

"The animation studio makes all those fairy-tale movies... come on you must have seen at least one of the movies even back in..."

It's then that Crystal remembers that Eleven is from 1985, *Beauty and the Beast* came out in the nineties. This time gap could take some getting used to on both their parts. It also makes her nervous about whether revealing future events could disrupt the space-time continuum. She knew Emma and Killian's story and she'd seen more than enough sci-fi movies to know the consequences that this could have.

"I'm sorry Jane..." she says.

"Why are you sorry?"

"Because I forgot **when** you and your friends come from. The movie I'm talking about doesn't come out until the 1990s."

The girls sit in silence for a few long moments, the reality of how bizarre and abnormal their whole situation was coming back to them.

Eleven then goes back to looking at the pictures on the phone. She comes across an image of Crystal holding her brother Gideon for the first time.

"Whose the baby?"

"That's an older photo, that's my baby brother Gideon."

"You have a brother?"

"A half-brother."

"Half-brother?" Eleven asks in confusion.

"What that means is he and I only share one parent, not two. He and I share the same father."

"Your once bad Papa?"

"Yeah... That's an old picture though, Gideon's four now and he'll be going to school in the fall..." Her eyes fill with tears, unable to comprehend the amount of time that has passed.

Crystal then goes on to show the girl more photos of her baby brother.

"That was his first birthday," she explains. "And this one is when he took his first steps."

There's a cute picture of a small baby running through a sprinkler on the lawn in only a diaper. "This one he'll want me to burn when he's older."

"He's cute," Eleven comments.

"Very cute, but also very evil."

"Evil?" the younger girl says in alarm.

"I don't mean it literally, although with my dad I really can't be that

surprised. What I mean by that is that Gideon is very rambunctious; he gets into everything and causes trouble whenever he can..."

She then shows a picture to prove her point. "This was when he poured dish soap into my friend's hot tub." The image of a mischievous little boy covered in bubbles from head to toe makes both of them laugh.

"Funny," Eleven/Jane smiles.

"It was pretty funny but really hard to clean up after."

"Is it nice having a brother?"

Crystal smiles, "It really is... For most of my life, it was just me and my mom and... I honestly thought that was all I needed... it's all I really knew, and for the longest time, I took advantage of that..." She swallows a lump in her throat. She decides that opening up to Eleven will hopefully bring them closer together. While the two were very different, they had both received trauma and scars that could help them relate to each other

"How?"

"By... by being the worst human being in the world. I was... a jerk, I was cruel... I did everything that I could to make my mother hate me and make her worry. And despite all this she still loved me. I... was the most horrible person to her and the one day she stood up to me... I lost her..."

The tears are now flowing from Crystal's eyes. While this started as a tactic to get Eleven to trust her, is now becoming a bond of honesty and trust. She knew that it was therapeutic to talk about her past, even if it was with someone she barely knew, but reliving the trauma could help with healing.

"She... died?" Eleven asks. The younger of the two feels immense sympathy for the other, and while she had not lost her mother, she was still gone in the sense that she could be a proper parent, her mind destroyed beyond repair, leaving her poor daughter to live on without her and have this void in her life. It's clear that Crystal had

that void too, but with much more pain associated with it. Eleven didn't know that most friendships don't start this way, but this experience was bringing the two closer together.

Crystal nods. "The day I lost her... I thought I'd lost everything..." She then shows a picture of her and her mother to Eleven. "You never really appreciate the things you have until they're gone."

"She's pretty," Jane offers.

"She was and the most wonderful person who didn't deserve me..."

There's a long pause as the fire crackles and Crystal gazes into the flames, watching the sparks jump and disappear into the air. She bites her lip and swallows the rest of her sadness. Clearly, she's gone a little overboard, but once you've opened the floodgates, it is hard to close them.

Inhaling sharply, she collects herself a little bit.

"I'm sorry El... I wanted to open up to you, to build a bit of trust between us, but I have gone a bit overboard by telling you my life story."

"Trust?" she asks quietly.

"I want you and I to work together and get out of this, but to that, we need to have confidence in each other... feel like we have each other's backs if things go sideways... and I thought the best way to do that was to share some personal things with you. Guess it didn't work, it probably only made you think that I'm a loser with lots of issues." She laughs a little at the end, wiping away the rest of her tears.

El pauses and ponders her answer. While the whole story is overwhelming, she does feel closer to Crystal than before. Her tactic worked enough for her to realize that they do have a lot in common, having tragic backstories, but also the power to save everyone they care about. They can work together like...

"I don't think of you as a loser..." she says gently. "We're going to work together as friends?"

"Yes, friends," the young adult affirms it.

"And friends don't lie."

"You're right they don't..." she pauses and sighs. "Which is why I'm telling you this now. When I said I was going to get firewood... that wasn't fully true. I was also testing my magic to see if I could get us out of here. It would make finding everyone else easier and the only reason I didn't tell you this was because I didn't want to scare you any further, clearly my magic is a new thing that freaks you out. And again, I'm trying to build that trust and you telling me that friends don't lie means that honesty is that first step. I'm sorry that I lied..."

Eleven nods, a little hurt at Crystal's admittance and she decides to hold out on trusting her fully... for now. It's clear that the older girl is trying her best to create a better bond between them. If they were alone, they might succumb to the elements or the creatures out there, but together, they could live through this. She nods to affirm the apology.

There is another long silence before Crystal offers to show her more pictures to pass the time. She then scrolls to a picture of her and her father.

Eleven can see the coldness in the man's dark brown eyes, almost sensing the evil beneath his features. Yet, he still has a cheeky smile that makes him seem nicer, "changed" as Crystal had put it. The father and daughter pose, with daughter leaning lovingly into her father.

"When I found him in Storybrooke, I was angry at first, like anyone would be and didn't want anything to do with him except make him feel my pain. But when he told me that he'd loved my mother and that he regretted what he'd done, I saw that we shared the same desire... to be loved. It took some time but eventually I managed to bond with him, and I gained the family that I'd always wanted... Filling that void within my life."

She shows a few more pictures of her with her family.

"That's Snow White, and her husband David or Prince Charming, and

that's Neal their son. I've known him since he was a baby. I like to think he was the first friend I made when I came to town. He knew that I was a good person, and he could barely rollover at the time. He's five now and already starting to read."

"You have a big family," Eleven says, she feels some envy towards the closeness Crystal has with everyone around her. While El had her friends and a boyfriend, she only had her Papa as her family; she didn't have brothers or sisters and she wanted the closeness that all those pictures were portraying.

"Yes, I do, but it's not about the size of a family, it's about the love you share. None of this will bring my mom back, but it helps with the healing."

Seeing the pictures suddenly gives Eleven an idea, how they might be able to locate everyone.

"Do you have a scarf or a blindfold?"

A/N: What do you think is Eleven's plan? Some sisterly bonding between the two characters, hope you like it.

18. Chapter 17: Ready Player Three

Chapter 17: Ready Player Three

"Should we split up?" Carlos asks as they approach the woods. The wind behind them is picking more and more as if to toss the entire kingdom of Auradon into disarray.

"I don't think that's a good idea," Evie says, staring into the darkness. Many of the gaps between the trees seem like portals leading to sinister places.

"If we do split up, we're more likely to find them faster," Jay reasons.

"But we shouldn't risk confronting the three of them alone," Ben says, still thinking that this was a job better left to the royal guards. Even with his misgivings, he would never let Mal face this alone.

"Let's just stay together," Mal agrees, knowing that if they got separated in the storm, they'd either end up soaked somewhere or on the end of one of Uma's blades. She grabs Ben's hand firmly.

Jay reaches into the bag on his back and pulls out the blades he'd borrowed from the school's *Swords and Shields* team. Everyone takes one, hoping that some form of protection will be helpful against the hostile VKs.

"Let's just do this as quickly as possible," the daughter of Maleficent insists, putting the sword on her belt.

With that, the five of them begin to enter the trees, slowly leaving the comforting lights and safety of Auradon Prep behind.

Thunder rumbles loudly, getting closer and closer as the storm approaches. Their footsteps seem to echo every time they step on a branch or other kinds of underbrush. Carlos and Evie stumble over some roots since it's dark enough where no one can see a hand in front of their face, except when lightning manages to break through the seemingly endless thicket of trees and bushes. It was not as though the lightning helped very much considering it nearly blinded

them every time there was a flash. It also did little to ease their growing fear and dread as they continued forward.

"Flashlights would have been a good idea," Jay mutters, nearly walking headfirst into a tree.

Knowing that Ben will not exactly like what she would like to do but knowing that the necessity for light is more important for their mission, Mal mutters a spell under her breath and conjures up flashlights for everyone. Ben says nothing and accepts it, using his light to shine through the thick, jungle-like greenery, trying to catch a glimpse of Uma, Harry, and/or Gil.

Just then, a rushing sound seems to approach them and the first few drops of rain are felt from above. Mal and Evie shudder as another strong gust of wind sweeps through the forest, apparently bringing a torrential downpour of rain with it the following minute. The entire team is drenched within seconds and they cannot see two feet in front of them. The sounds of rain hitting the leaves and branches of the trees create the sounds like waves on the seashore or the rushing water of a river. Evie attempts to brush her sopping wet hair from her face and shine her flashlight out further, but all she can see are the sheets of rain dropping down on them like a waterfall.

"I knew we shouldn't have come out," Ben mutters, but decides to help rather than complain about their situation.

His beam of light eventually comes upon a very large tree, big enough where they could all fit under and hopefully wait out the worst of the storm. He takes Mal's hand and guides her towards the tree.

"This way!" he attempts to shout as a loud clap of thunder shakes the ground they stand on. Fortunately, the king of Auradon doesn't have to repeat himself as the other VKs follow his lead as their desire to find shelter is as strong as his own.

The group of five crouches down under the tree, trying to shelter themselves from the "flash" flood of rain. Mal is doing her best not to shiver until Ben puts his jacket over her shoulders. Deciding to return his kindness, she puts the jacket over both of them and they huddle

together to keep warm. Their hands eventually find one another, and she gives him a gentle squeeze as if to silently apologize for getting them into this situation. Carlos shares his jacket with Evie and Jay pulls his own over his head and the group remains relatively quiet, listening to the storm surrounding their temporary haven.

Another thunderous boom echoes through the forest, making everything seem so much bigger and scarier than before.

It's then that lightning begins to illuminate the surrounding woods, except this time, it seems to flicker and flash in a very rapid pattern. None of the group had ever seen this before. Immediately, Mal senses that something is off, but the lighting is so bright that all of them have to shut their eyes to avoid going blind. They huddle even closer, fearing that the storm will continue to get worse.

...

Then, as strange as it had started, the rain begins to slow; fewer and fewer droplets pelt their hidden forms, the deafening crashes of thunder start to fade into the distance, and the lightning no longer illuminates the woods in scary and bizarre blazes of light.

"Looks like it's ending," Carlos says as he peeks his head from under the coat.

Slowly, Evie and Jay come out of their protective crouches, and Ben and Mal soon follow. The king insists that Mal keep the coat around her shoulders as he stretches out. Evie, Jay, and Mal both wring the water out of their long hair.

The daughter of Maleficent bites her lip extremely hard, feeling guilty for their current state.

"I'm really sorry guys," she says softly. "This was a stupid idea. We should have waited until the storm let up."

"Wow, the royal pain admits that she's wrong," a voice from the other side of the tree sneers.

Immediately, the group of five turn their flashlights in the direction of the voice and one of the beams lands on Uma's soaking wet, but

smirking face. Her turquoise/white dreadlocks drip off the excess water as her dark brown eyes show off a sinister glint from the flashlights. Additional laughter is heard, and the bright brown eyes of Harry Hook and Gil are seen, along with their equally smug faces. They too peer around the large trunk of the tree at the soaking wet heroes.

It takes a moment with both parties staring at each other to realize that they'd both sought shelter under the same tree. Mal's eyes flash a bright green in anger and draws her sword to defend her friends. Uma mirrors it until both steel blades are inches from each other/

"Fancy meetin' you 'ere," Harry chuckles, digging his hook into the bark of the tree and joining his captain in a fighting stance.

"Did anyone else notice the weird lightning?" Gil asks, seemingly more focused on that than the coming fight.

"That was really weird," Jay agrees, feeling that both teams should be more concerned about getting out of this dark, creepy forest than reigniting old rivalries.

"Something's wrong," Ben says, fear underlying his words. "That wasn't an ordinary storm." He too was in no mood to fight and would rather get everyone out of the chilly cold before they all got sick.

"Who cares, the important thing is we found you and we're not letting you get away," Mal snarls.

"Tough words from a purple-haired princess," Uma smirks.

"Guys, I think we should just try to find a way out of here," Evie says, she was also seeing reason and not red as Mal was.

The daughter of Maleficent doesn't seem to hear any voice of reason, not from her boyfriend, nor from her best friends. "If you think you're not going to pay for what you did to Ben at the Cotillion, you've got another thing coming."

"Let's see if you've lost your touch," the daughter of Ursula taunts.

"GUYS!" Carlos says. "We need to get out of here before we get

pneumonia."

"Not happening," is the response.

Just then Evie lets out a bloodcurdling scream when a large snake slithers past her leg. She practically jumps into Carlos' arms.

Uma takes that moment to lunge forward as Mal, which she barely has time to block before the pirate captain takes off into the woods. She'd decided she wants to battle in a space where everyone can see the reformed VK reclaim her true villainous nature.

"Come on you morons!" she orders.

Harry immediately jumps up like a lap dog and follows her; Gil pauses for a long moment, looking at the group from Auradon.

"GIL!"

With a sigh, he goes after the group.

Without a moment of hesitation, Mal charges after the group, much to the chagrin of her friends.

"MAL WAIT!" Ben shouts, forcing himself to go after her, with the other VKs not far behind. "IT'S TOO DANGEROUS!"

However, the purple-haired teen doesn't hear anything and just keeps running, her face flushed with anger and her eyes glowing brightly in the darkness. She doesn't care what happens, only if her rival pays for everything that she's done.

"Why is she doing this?" Jay asks as they struggle to keep Mal within their sights.

"Pride," Evie assumes. "That and just unrequited anger."

"These woods go off the grounds of Auradon," Ben pants, nearly getting hit in the face by a low-hanging branch. "They could potentially lead out of the kingdom."

"It would have been nice to know that earlier," Carlos snaps.

"I didn't think we'd go this deep into the forest," the king insists.

...

Uma continues running, laughing to herself the entire way. She wants to make a big showing of her and Mal's rivalry and she wants to humiliate her former friend. The goodie-goodie princess was not better than her, and never would be, just because she fell in love with the popular king. Everything good happened to the purple-haired dragon lady, while she's had to fight her entire life. She didn't exactly have a plan of what she was going to do after she'd defeated Mal, but anything goes by now.

Eventually, the VK comes into a clearing, where the moonlight is attempting to poke its way through the clouds, but through the dim, gray lighting, she can see a house in the centre of the clearing, with weirdly shaped bushes and a stranger sort of esthetic to the whole property. Nothing felt right about this place, but Uma ignores the uneasiness in her gut and figures that she should toy with the group a bit more before actually going to face them. She notices the very large glass structure behind the house and decides, that would be the perfect place to hide and prepare for battle.

Harry and Gil finally manage to catch up with her; both are sweat, bruised and even bleeding from cuts due to them blindly following her through the woods. Harry leans over to try and catch his breath, while Gil leans against a tree, trying not to pass out from the intense exertion of exercise. They too are shocked by the house seemingly in the middle of nowhere, but they actually want to listen to the sense of dread in their stomachs.

"Let's regroup at the back of the house," the captain declares.

"W-Why?" Harry asks.

"It's more fun for us."

"You...mean... you," Gil sputters, attempting to gain control of his breathing.

"Somethin' isn't right..." Harry says darkly.

Frustrated Uma turns to her crew.

"What's my name?" she snaps, raising her chin up in pride and authority.

Harry doesn't answer, he's still trying to gather his bearings. He leans forward to loosen a muscle cramp, nearly poking himself with his fake hook.

"***What's my name?!***" she hisses through gritted teeth. She can hear Mal approaching through the forest and wanted to at least a head start on their game of cat and mouse.

"U-ma," the son of Captain Hook sighs.

"Then let's go," she snarls, before heading towards the large looming house.

Both boys groan in pain and hesitate at following their captain... this is wrong. Everything about this is wrong, but reluctantly they go forward.

...

Within a minute or two of the crew's departure, Mal appears at the exact same spot of the tree line, her eyes still very bright green and her sword still raised. She did not let anything get her way; she'd hacked her way through the thicket, not letting anything stop her from wringing Uma's throat. She doesn't know why she's this angry, there's a fire in the pit of her stomach that feels like a raging inferno. Unfortunately, this passion is preventing her from thinking clearly. She too is ignoring the ominous atmosphere surrounding this entire situation, and also the strange tingling sensation felt around her as if something were alive and pressing down on her body. However, she is still going to push through no matter what happens or the cost. Ignoring her friends' calls for her in the distance, she squints in the darkness, the moonlight barely peeking through the former storm clouds, and she spots the trio of pirates heading around towards the back of the house.

Not stopping to think any further, she charges through the field,

heading right towards the back part of the house.

...

Ben stumbles over a root and lands in the wet grass at the edge of the clearing. He and the rest of the group are sweaty, wet, battered, and bruised while trying to follow Mal.

"MAL!" he calls out, desperately scanning for her purple hair in the darkness. His voice carries out into the open area in front of them.

"Does anyone else not see this as weird?" Jay questions, looking over at the house. The beams from the moon seem to land on it, casting sharp shadows to make the place look more sinister, but also seemed to be acting like a spotlight and putting a focus on it.

"No, this is bad," Carlos agrees.

"This is not part of Auradon," Ben swallows, wiping mud from his pants.

"Are you sure?" Evie asks.

"Positive, this house is not on any map of the kingdom. And I've studied those things for years."

"Could we have walked into another kingdom or the countryside?" Carlos suggests.

"I don't really know," the king says. "But something is very wrong here."

"MAL COME BACK!" Evie calls, cupping her hands to allow her voice to carry further.

The boys join her in trying to bring the daughter of Maleficent back.

However, their calls to her are in vain as her tiny figure continues to get smaller and smaller as she crosses the field.

The large glass-like structure behind the house reflects the book and seems to shine at them as if beckoning them to come closer. The

strange thing place towered over the house and seemed to be almost the size of an arena, if not bigger. The four kids knew that something was very off and they could sense the imminent danger before them.

"Whatever that thing is... it's bad news," Jay grimaces. "And we have to go near it don't we?"

"If we ever want to see Mal again," Evie sighs. She brushes her hand through her wet hair and holds her head. This intense pressure was beginning to build in her head ever since the storm ended. At first, she thought it was just the change in the barometric pressure, but now there was like this buzzing surrounding her and her ears were ringing. This tingling sensation was becoming unbearable, but she keeps her mouth shut in order to focus on getting her best friend back.

"Let's just be careful," Ben swallows. They all draw their swords and reluctantly begin walking towards their house, hoping to save Mal before she got herself and all of them killed.

...

Meanwhile, in a darkened room, a scientist sat at a computer screen, his smile as wide as a Cheshire Cat's, he can barely contain the excitement he feels as the third group of players entered his game.

A/N: Ready Play Three. Please follow and review.

19. Chapter 18: Dire Straights

Chapter 18: Dire Straights

"So how does this work?" Crystal asks, having conjured up a scarf for Eleven to tie around her eyes.

"Have you ever heard of sensory deprivation?" the younger girl asks.

"Not really, only in like torture situations."

"My papa used to put me in a tank of salt water..."

"So basically, the same thing," Crystal interrupted.

Eleven nods, unable to disagree with that point.

"And it enhanced my abilities."

"Enhanced how?"

"I was able to travel into a void in my mind and I could locate people, no matter where they were... even..." She swallows hard. "In alternate dimensions. It's how we first learned about the Demogorgon."

"Demi-what?"

"A monster that existed in an alternate dimension from our own."

Crystal muses this idea over in her head for a moment and then shrugs. "Not out of the realm of possibility for our world."

Eleven is surprised by how casually her ally takes this news.

"I've seen a human turn into a dragon, werewolves, and my dad as a troll, so alternative dimensional beings are not out our realm of possibility."

"Your papa? He looks normal."

"That's what he wants you to see, this is his true form."

She conjures up a picture of her father as the Dark One, shiny skin and all.

Eleven flinches in fear at the horrible sight. This... thing, was much more of a monster than her father was... at least it had a face unlike the Demogorgon.

Crystal then burns the photo in the palm of her hand. "You can see why I prefer to say that I look like my mom."

The younger of the two attempts to shake off the horrific face of Crystal's father and decides to focus on the task at hand. She folds the scarf into the appropriate shape.

"So, do you need a salt tank of water or...?"

"I don't need that anymore, but if you have something that makes noise... like a TV or a radio."

"Since we're in the middle of nowhere, I doubt we can get the TV or radio,"

"My papa called it static or white noise."

"Oh, okay well I can get the radio on my phone but since we're out here, the static should suffice for white noise, and just use these." Crystal hands over a pair of earbud headphones. "They're noise-cancelling so hopefully this should help."

Jane is about to ask what noise-cancelling meant but decides to trust Crystal's word for the time being. She ties the scarf around her eyes and then puts the buds in her ears.

"Do you need anything else?" the older girl offers.

"Just quiet."

"Okay then, if it gets worse, let me know..." She whispers. "And no Demogorgons please." Before pulling up the radio app on her phone.

The sound of a faint buzzing begins to enter Eleven's ears. It feels so strange to have these things directly in her ears, it didn't feel right.

However, the static of the radio and the lack of external noise from the jungle helps her go into a meditative state of mind. She inhales sharply before going into the void.

...

Eleven opens her eyes again, she's in a black void of nothingness. She looks down and can see the thin layer of water below her feet. She begins looking around, attempting to focus and find someone she knows.

However, something isn't right. Instead of hearing nothing like she usually does, there is a low buzzing noise that creates ripples in the water at her feet. It creates a vibration within her head that is painful. She's never felt this sensation before, and it is extremely frightening. She attempts to move forward in her mind, but the movements are stiff and slow as if these pulsations are slowing her down.

Suddenly, a figure appears in front of her. She recognizes who it is and tries to run to him, but her movements are sluggish and even painful. It's as if the water is pulling her down into the floor, being unable to move as fast she wants to. It was like slogging through deep water instead of the shallow pools she was used to.

"Mike!" Eleven calls, her voice lost in the vibrating universe.

She pushes forward despite how painful it is. Her head begins to hurt as she fights to get to her boyfriend.

Mike lays unconscious on the floor of the void, unresponsive to her calls for him. Her heart pounds in her chest and her body strains in attempting to resist the hold the strange power has over everything. The tension in her body intensifies and the water beneath her feet becomes swells as the pulsations turn to tremors and shake everything. Her head burns in great pain and tears begin falling from her eyes.

"MIKE!" she screams.

Finally, she seems to reach him, and she kneels next to him. She

reaches out to touch his shoulder.

"El..." he whispers, although the intensifying rhythms of power become deafening.

"MIKE PLEASE!" El cries out, trying to touch her boyfriend and find out where he is.

Something suddenly strikes the girl, forcing her back into the water.

Some long and thin things descend from the darkness above them and slowly begin to wrap around Mike.

"NO! Eleven screams out, she tries to reach out with her powers to stop this unknown threat, but they continue to wrap around Mike's thin frame slowly begin to lift him upwards.

The tremors have now amassed to the equivalency of an earthquake, shaking everything to the point where the water is starting to splash over Eleven's helpless form, causing her to slip and be unable to stop the darkness. Her mind begins to burn in agony like a red-hot iron spike is being driven into her brain. The water begins to pull her further away from Mike as he vanishes upwards into the void.

"MIKE!" she screams through her tears.

When he's no longer there, El feels as though she's being pulled back, being drowned by these waves of water, like Heather, the lifeguard she'd seen in the summer being consumed by the Mind Flayer.

"NOOOOO!" Eleven screams, the pain inside her head is unbearable and her throat is raw from screaming and the water flowing into it. Her face disappears beneath the water and she's pulled into the darkness, no matter how hard she fights. In a last attempt to get free, something shifts inside of herself and a massive seismic wave of telekinetic energy explode from her mind.

She rips her blindfold off, blood gushing from her nose and sweat drenching her entire body. She falls back and hits her head on the root of the tree. She shuts her eyes and begins gasping for air as if she was still drowning.

Eleven rolls onto her side in the dirt, her head pounding so violently, it feels as if it's going to explode. The earbuds have managed to stay in her ears and the radio noise is still on. She tears the buds out and tries to gather her bearings in some form. Her ears ring intensely to the point where she feels as if she's gone deaf. Her lungs will not take in air and her blood seems to want to explode out of her body.

She finally inhales completely and begins to catch her breath. Slowly, the ringing within her ears begins to fade and she can hear the jungle around her; the birds, the snakes, and the animals. Her head aches less and less and the pain in her body subsides to an odd tingling.

She opens her eyes to see that Crystal is flat on the ground, her nose bleeding, and more blood pounding in her head. El's ally slowly sits up and holds her head. She'd been affected by that wave of power that the girl had expelled.

While Jane had been in the void, Crystal had been waiting patiently. She was slightly concerned when blood began trickling out of the girl's nose, but she decided not to disturb her. When Eleven had said Mike, she assumed that this strange ability had located someone. While she couldn't understand what was happening, she became concerned when the girl began screaming and thrashing around. Crystal tried to help, but suddenly that wave of energy blasted her backwards and onto the ground, her ears ringing and popping while also making her head throb. In her mind, Crystal wonders if this is how other people feel like when she released her own seismic explosions when the two forces of light magic and dark magic battle for control of her body.

"What the hell happened?" is all she manages to say. "That wasn't the Demogorgon was it?"

She wipes the blood from her own nose and looks at Eleven, still laying there shell-shocked.

Eleven pants as tears still falling from her eyes. Crystal goes over and wipes the girl's nose with the discarded scarf.

"Do you need water?" she asks.

The young girl just nods, and the daughter of Rumpelstiltskin goes to grab the canteen. While Jane/Eleven slowly drinks, Crystal retrieves her phone, which had been cracked by the telekinetic wave. Undiscouraged, she uses magic to fix it and then helps the girl sit up against one of the raised roots of the tree.

"What happened? Did you see Mike?"

"I...I did, b-but something got him..."

"What was it?"

"I-I..." new tears flow out the girl's eyes.

"It's okay, we'll find him."

"But how?" Eleven whispers in pain. "Something was in there... with me and it caused everything to..."

"Stop working?" Crystal prompted.

"Y-Yes,"

"Did it feel like your mind was tingling and then it started to burn like it was on fire?"

She nods.

"I felt the same way when I tried to teleport. I'm starting to think that something is surrounding this place that is preventing us from leaving, or from using our abilities properly."

"The bad man?"

"Yeah, this is probably his doing... we need to find everyone and get out of here before it becomes any worse."

Eleven leans her head up and looks at the leaves in the tree trying to curb nausea and the pain in her body. Her vision blurs every so often and her head still feels it's being split open with an axe. She is in no shape to go anywhere at the moment, the pain still radiating through her body.

"How many fingers am I holding up?" Crystal asks, ensuring the girl's vision has not been damaged.

"Three," she answers.

"Now follow my finger with just your eyes."

Eleven obeys.

"That's good, you don't have a concussion. You certainly do have some powerful telekinesis," the older girl says in admiration. "How's your control of it?"

"Control as in being able to move things?"

"Yeah, even at your strongest do you still feel that you're in charge of your body?"

Eleven ponders the thought for a few minutes, sorting her thoughts in her head. As she grew older, her abilities did seem to be getting stronger. Her ability to go into the Void was stronger; she did not need a sensory deprivation tank anymore. With Kali's help, she'd been able to move part of a train by channelling her anger into movement. Her battle against the Mindflayer over the summer had pushed her powers to the absolute limit. Even when they were dormant for a little while, once they came back, it felt... different. Ever since she got her telekinesis back, there were times when they would abruptly cancel out or it would cause more strain on her body than she was used to. She assumed that those were the side effects of being bitten by the monster... But looking back, when her powers were at maximum strength, it didn't feel like she had control any longer. Like this force was greater than what her body could handle. She was afraid that if something did go wrong, she might hurt the people she cared about. The thought frightened her immensely and she didn't want to think about it.

"Not always," she admits finally. She explains to Crystal what had happened to her and how her powers felt more unstable now ever since the thing bit her.

The daughter of the Dark One listens to the girl's words intently,

nodding and taking mental notes. Once she finishes she asks:

"Are your powers connected to your emotions?"

Eleven/Jane nods. She takes a long drink of water before speaking.
"Why are you asking me this?"

"Because I've been in your shoes; in fact sometimes I still end up in your shoes. Does it feel like two forces of power are battling inside yourself, wanting to gain control?"

The young girl nods again.

"You and I are more alike than I thought," Crystal says. "As soon as you're feeling better we need to start something."

"What?"

"Training."

A/N: Please follow and review.

20. Chapter 19: No Escape

Chapter 19: No Escape

"I can't believe that Mal did this," Evie mutters under her breath as she and the others begin walking towards the strange house in the middle of the field. Her heart is pounding intensely as the eerie structure looms ever closer. The dark windows appear almost to be watching them, but the strangest part is the football-sized glass structure attached to it, it's taller than anything they had ever seen before. It was almost like a dome that stretched a large percentage of the field behind the house. The moonlight glinted off the glass at them. They had never seen anything like this before and they begin to grow more nervous with each passing step, despite being armed.

"You know how impulsive she is," Ben says.

"Yeah, well her impulsive nature is likely going to get us all killed someday," Carlos mutters. He hates the sight of the house even more than the rest of them. This place looked like something out of the horror movies he'd binge-watch on TV late at night. He's just glad that Dude, his dog wasn't here to blab about how after seeing one film, he slept with the lights on for a month afterwards.

"Well, Uma isn't exactly being smart about this either," Jay adds.

The four kids from Auradon finally reach the shadow of the house. They gaze upwards to see if there's any sign of life. No lights are on and there's only the sound of the wind... no crickets or wildlife from the forest can be heard.

"Should we knock and ask to search their property for Mal?" Ben wonders.

"No way!" Carlos snaps.

"What's up with you?" Jay asks his best friend.

"I've seen too many movies where the dumb teenagers find this spooky old house in the middle of nowhere and when they enter,

none of them come back alive."

"But it's trespassing if we just walk around like this," Ben insists.

"Morales are not going to help here," Carlos argues. "Let's just go around back and hope Mal has stopped to rest."

"I honestly don't think anyone actually lives here," Jay says, also trying to convince Ben not to waste their time with talking to the possible owners of this gothic nightmare.

"It only seems empty, but something is in there," the son of Cruella swallows hard.

"Dude you have got to stop watching those movies," Jay says.

While the boys continue to argue amongst themselves, Evie has remained silent the entire time. The pressure and tingling in her head continue to mount, making her brain feel like it wants to explode. It's become so intense that she can barely focus on anything. She reaches out and touches the house, only for the pain to get even worse that she goes onto her knees from it.

The boys notice her weakening state and rush to help her.

"Evie are you okay? What's wrong?" Carlos asks, placing his hand on his shoulder.

"It's my head," she whimpers. "It's killing me."

"What does it feel like?" Ben asks.

"Like there's tingling in my head, it's like being stabbed by a million tiny needles. I... I think there's something in this house that is making... me like this..."

"You need to go back to the woods and wait for us," the king of Auradon states bluntly. "You're in no shape to find Mal."

"But she's my best... friend..." the young girl insists. She tries to stand, her legs wobbly as if she was a baby deer learning to walk. Jay is by her side, letting her lean on him for support.

"And your best friend doesn't want to see you like this," Jay adds.

"Carlos and I will look for Mal around back, you two stay here until Evie is well enough to walk and then go back to the forest and wait for us," Ben says.

Evie wants to argue, but she practically falls into the wet grass as her strength continues to drain from her body.

Jay holds her up. "Hurry and be careful."

"We will," Carlos says. He and Ben grip their swords tightly and disappear around the side of the house.

...

Meanwhile, Uma, Gil and Harry are continuing to run around the giant glass structure, trying to stay ahead of Mal, as they know she is still pursuing them... Well, it's more like Uma was dragging her crewmates along as they attempt to keep up with her.

"Man, how far does this thing go?" Gil mutters, looking at Harry.

The sons of Gaston and Captain Hook look at each other nervously; neither wants to keep running away, in fact, they were with the heroes about trying to find a way home. Instead, they're following their captain, soaking wet and covered in mud, towards some unknown danger. Something didn't sit right with them about this place. As they run next to the glass wall, Gil would occasionally try to glance through to see what was inside this humungous thing, but everything was dark and the glass was practically opaque, with barely any light getting in. However, every so often, a strange noise could be heard on the other side of the glass. A rumbling noise, and for a second, the second mate could swear that the wall of glass shifted to become a bit longer as if to lengthen their run. Of course, he can't say anything because the others would think he's crazy and by the fact that his lungs hurt from running so intensely. Harry had also glanced at the building a few times and for a moment, he thought that he saw some sort of blue light emanating underneath this domed structure, but he too couldn't stop to think about it in order to keep up the daughter of Ursula.

But Uma continues to push them, her stubborn nature and desire to best Mal, overshadowing logic and reason it seemed to them

The daughter of Ursula's smug grin had long since faded as she pushed herself to continue running. Why she didn't turn around and the fight was a mystery to her, but she almost was compelled to keep going. She hadn't really been paying attention to any of the strange occurrences that her crew had noticed; the only thing that she felt was this strange buzzing noise that seemed to vibrate around her body and slowly work its way into her brain. She did her best to ignore it but the tingling became harder to do this and her head begins to throb. She shook her head and kept going as if she needed to outrun this sensation and her rival.

The trio of VKs finally reaches the edge of the building, and without any further thought, Uma turns left and begins to run along the back of the strange thing.

"Uma... please..." Gil pants, barely able to form words. "We... need to... stop."

"A-Aye," Harry wheezes.

"Suck... it... up!" she snaps, with the remaining breath, she has.

Just then, Uma sees something materialize out of the darkness. At the edge of the glass wall, a section of it had opened and a bright blue light was emanating out, cutting through the darkness like a blade. The tingling in her brain becomes even stronger as she gets closer to the light. She squints to try to see inside. While it might be a good place to hide and be able to catch her breath, the thrill of the chase and leading Mal on was still too much. She plans to go around this door and keep going.

However, as soon as she's about to pass the opening, some powerful force sweeps the pirate captain off her feet and sucks her into the blue light. She no longer has control of her body as she's completely blinded by this light and is sucked inside.

Unfortunately, both Gil and Harry, who saw what happened, are unable to stop in time and are also sucked into the opening and

engulfed by the blue light.

...

Mal's head is throbbing and her heart is pounding wildly against her chest. While running wasn't her strongest skill, she had no choice in the matter. The rogues from the Isle could not be allowed to getaway. She had thought about turning into a dragon to pursue Uma and her crew, flying would have ended this chase sooner, but every time that she tried to do the transformation, her entire body stung, like she'd been poked by a hundred red-hot iron spikes. The sensation left her weak and shaky to the point that she wants to stop running, but she keeps going despite her body's protests. She doesn't know why she can't stop; it's as if she's being compelled to continue forward.

While her body was burning, her head was throbbing and vibrating; she knew that this was not normal, and her ears were ringing due to this strange sensation. Unknowingly acting like Uma, she tries to ignore it. She has to catch the VKs and end all the suffering at Auradon...

Wait, what suffering? Who am I even chasing again? What did they do? She thinks to herself. What is happening?

She's had eyes on both Gil and Harry the entire time until they turned the corner of this weird structure. Mal is so caught up in her thoughts, fighting the pain in her brain that she doesn't see a few panes of the glass open in front of her, in a different place from where Uma and the others were sucked inside. She collides with the glass and falls to the ground, but before she can even think about it, the blue light engulfs her and the panes of glass shut and become dark again.

...

"MAL!" Ben calls out.

"MAL COME ON!" Carlos shouts.

The two boys are racing next to the wall of glass, trying to find any sign of the daughter of Maleficent. The swords clenched in their

hands, worried that they would either encounter Uma's band of rogues or some new danger produced by this house. Both knew that everything about their situation was wrong and that they had to save Mal from this unknown threat.

However, before they can even reach the end of one side of the glass wall, a sheet of it opens in front of them and their bodies are pulled inside before they even had time to scream or make any noise.

...

"Just try to relax," Jay says as comfortably as he can, trying to keep Evie from passing out on the ground.

"It hurts so much," she moans. She's fighting unconsciousness, desperate to stay awake, but her strength continues to deplete with each passing second.

From the back of the house, a dark, thin shape is approaching them, making a sort of rustling noise as it goes. It had some kind of intent, malicious intent and would not be sudee from its mission.

Long thin vines finally reach the two VKs and several of them wrap around Jay's ankles.

"What the-" the son of Jafar says. He doesn't have time to grab his sword before he's violently dragged along the grass towards an opening in the glass area. He screams out for Evie, and frantically grabs onto anything, ripping clumps of grass in his attempts to escape. He can only scream one more time before he's pulled inside the sinister structure.

Evie had watched in horror as one of her best friends had been pulled kicking and screaming away from her. She attempts to get up and run before these vines come for her, but she's become so weak, that she's barely gone a foot before the same thing happens to her. The thin green tentacle-like vines wrap around her ankles and pull her towards the back of the house. She's so weakened by whatever energy was around her that the daughter of the Evil Queen can barely grasp the grass before she vanishes into the blue light.

A/N: It's finally happened. Everyone is now inside the Reptile Room and there seems to be no escape. What do you think will happen next?

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